

SIX
OCCASIONAL SERMONS,
ON
IMPORTANT SUBJECTS.

By JAMES RIDDOCH A. M.

One of the Ministers of St. Paul's Chappel in Aberdeen.

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P R E F A C E.

TH^{O'} the author of the following sermons is very sensible that they need to be ushered into the world with an apology, as the subjects of which they treat are not new, nor the manner in which they are expressed peculiar or elegant, yet as the ordinary apologies have been so often repeated, and are generally so little regarded, he submits to the judgement of the public, without presuming to offer any thing in his own vindication: only he imagines he has reason to hope that as he reaps no profit by the publication, expects no praise, solicited no subscriptions; and makes no specious promises to invite men to buy; the reader will justify the intention, tho' he should censure the execution and accuse him of nothing worse than having failed in an innocent, and perhaps laudable attempt.

The revisal of these discourses amused the author's solitary hours, and diverted his mind from more painful thoughts; he is sure they can do no harm, it is possible they may do some good. Tho' the observations contained in them are not new to the world, yet some of them may be new to the reader, some may revive the remembrance of useful truths, once known, but now forgotten; others may perhaps improve the conduct
where

P R E F A C E.

where the duties are known and remembered, but negligently and superficially discharged, and most of them, it is hoped, will be found just, and in some degree useful.

And tho' it be true, that there are already many sermons published, and some of them so excellent, that few writers can hope to equal, much less to excel them; yet it ought to be considered, that if some are making their appearance in the world, others are wearing out of print, and that of consequence their number does not increase so much as men are apt to imagine, and as mens opinions of sermons are very different, and their minds, either so constituted by nature, or formed by education, and habit; that they do not all relish the same way and manner of expression, nor feel alike the force of the same arguments, a very indifferent sermon may sometimes have an happy effect, where those that are much more excellent have failed. The author sincerely wishes that these may be useful, with this honest intention they are published and if, with many superior to them, they produce no good effect, and shall soon be forgotten, he will have no peculiar cause to complain.

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The Necessity and Usefulness of Attending
To the Progress of our Years.

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S E R M O N

Preached upon New - Years - Day.

PSALM CXL. 4.

*Man is like a thing of nought, his time passeth away like
a shadow.*

IF after a few years spent in this vain world, we were
to ly down in the dust and retain no traces of
what we once were; had we nothing to hope or fear
from our conduct in this existence, we might, with
some degree of decency, begin our years with the
sentiments of the sensualist, and say, *come I will
fetch wine, and we will fill ourselves with strong
drink, and this year shall be like the last, and much
more abundant,* but when we consider that life and
immortality are brought to light by the gospel, that

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our present existence is a state of probation, upon which an eternity of happiness or misery depends, and that as death leaves, judgement will find us; it becomes us to have more serious thoughts of the progress of our time, and the important business for which we were sent into the world.

WHEN our years are few in their largest number, and that small number very uncertain too; when we know that they are carrying us forward to a strict examination, an unalterable sentence, and an unchangeable state; the transition from one year to another should awaken very serious reflections, and at least induce us to consider what we are doing, whither we are going, and where this swift stream of time upon which we are born along is like to land us at last. Indeed if we could retard the current of our years, if we could recal them after they are gone, or if we could with reason hope that however they are spent they shall end in a blessed eternity, or at least leave us in a tolerable state: we might part with one after another without hesitation, and find ourselves growing poorer and poorer in time without thinking much of the consequences. But we can no more lessen the swiftness of their career than stop the sun in his course; when we part with them once, we part with them forever,
and

and the state in which they leave us at last, knows no medium between the extremes of happiness and misery. Every moment comes like a messenger to ask our commands for another world; takes what we give, hastens to be gone, will return no more to give us an opportunity to mend the message, but faithfully carries forward what is given in charge, to our final trial, while conscience in the mean time marks down the commission. With the greatest swiftness, there is the profoundest silence too, last night gave us no warning that a whole year of life was gone, and this year has stolen in without ceremony, comes quietly forward, and if we suffer it, will depart in silence too.

OR if a change of this kind whispers any kindly warnings into Reason's ear, men are so foolish as to drown them in the hurry of diversions, the noise of extravagance and the tumultuous din of riot and gaming. But surely something more serious might be expected, when we part with such a large portion of our time, when we begin a year that may perhaps carry a commission to remove us into a world of spirits, and bid an eternal farewell to another, that bears along with it many words, and actions for which we must one day answer, and cannot now recall. Grateful thanks to God for the

blessings of his watchful providence; an attentive survey of the nature of our conduct and the state of our hearts; and serious reflections upon the swift and silent progress of our time, would be more natural upon such an occasion; more suitable to our profession as Christians, more worthy of our reason as men, and more consistent with our duty as members of society, than levity, dissipation, and riot.

IN order to suggest such thoughts as these, I have chosen to recommend to your meditation the words which I have read, *man is like a thing of nought, his time passeth away like a shadow*. In the further discoursing upon them I shall presume to offer some few advices, with respect to the manner in which we should begin and end our years, and then conclude with such inferences as the subject shall afford, and your time permit me to offer.

FIRST I would advise you to make a solemn pause in your progress, to look back upon the years that are past, and seriously consider how far you are come from the cradle, and how near, even in the course of nature, you are arrived to the grave: if you be twenty years of age, one third of your life is already gone, if you are thirty, one half of it is already behind you, and if you are fifty, you have
but

but poor ten or twenty years to see the sun and sojourn among the sons of men; of the time that is gone you cannot now call back; one hour, undo one single action, nor recover so much as a moment to live it over again, tho' all the joys of heaven, and all the torments of hell depended upon its return; the days, the months, the years that once were before you, are now vanished into meer shadows, and swallowed up for ever in the gulph of eternity, and thus ere long will it be with life it self, you must part with it as entirely, and as irrecoverably as you have now done with the by-gone year; no hour to be recalled, no error to be mended, nothing to be done but to launch out into eternity, appear before God, and receive according to the deeds done in the body whether they have been good or whether they have been evil: what if we should suppose at present, that instead of the transition from one year to another, we were making the more awful transition from time to eternity, from life to judgement, from earth to an invisible state; could we look back upon what is past with pleasure, forward to the supreme tribunal with hope, and calmly say I am ready? or should we not rather have many things to do, which yet in the midst of the greatest uncertainty we still leave undone? one would have flanders to unsay; another would

would have ill gotten goods to restore; a third would have forgiveness to ask and to obtain; a fourth would have his wordly affairs to settle; and almost all of us an imperfect repentance to finish, and some things to do without and within.

YET tomorrow may bring us into this awful state, and a few more transitions from one year to another will certainly do so; *for our time is determined upon earth, and bounds appointed that we cannot pass.* But as we part with our time in small parcels, so we are insensible of the loss; an hour, a day, a month is not much out of the mighty sum we suppose we are to enjoy; and as the body gradually grows up to perfection, and by insensible degrees declines to a decrepid condition, we are thoughtless of our progress, we are inattentive to the sum of years that we have left behind, and continue still supposing that we are rich in time. To remove this infatuation I would recommend a solemn pause for reflection at the end of every year; it would shew us how far we are advanced on the road of life, and teach us to judge of the short duration of the time we fondly imagine is before us, by the swift passage of what is behind; and probably recall to our remembrance some transgressions that need repentance, which might be otherwise buried in oblivion, till they rose up against us in judgement.

INDEED

INDEED if the years that are past were never more to be heard of, it might perhaps be prudent for many of us to think of them no more, because a serious review of them may awaken a troublesome companion within, revive the remembrance of faults that we would chuse to forget, of crimes of which we have but slenderly repented, and of injustice and injuries done to our fellow men which we have not yet repaired, nor are much disposed to repair; but alas tho' we hide these things from ourselves and the world, every day brings on a discovery, and revolving years will bring them all to light, *for there is nothing secret that shall not be revealed, nor hid that shall not be known.* It is true the transition from one year to another is so easy, that we may make a shift to stave off reflection from year to year, to transfer the guilt of one fleeting period to another, and carry along with us (if we will) unrepented crimes upon our consciences, unmortified passions in our breasts, and iniquitous schemes in our heads; but this is only providing for ourselves more difficulties, and greater perplexity if ever we do repent, and if we do not repent, arming death with more terrors, and increasing a weight that shall lie heavy at our hearts in a day of judgement, and sink us so much deeper in the bottomless pit. Therefore while we have time, we should commune

mune in private with our hearts, and consider whether our progress in holiness and goodness is proportionable to our advancement in years; whether every year as it past has done something to prepare us for heaven: subdued some criminal passion, reformed some vicious habit, altered something that was amiss in our hearts or conduct, or if it has planted some good disposition in the mind, improved some virtue in the practice, or sent some treasures into heaven by the offices of charity.

IF we only find that one year was given to amusement, another devoted to business, a third distinguished by some fortunate step that we have taken in life; we may look back upon them with sorrow, and say with a sigh, my time has been thrown away! for what are all these to the design of our existence upon earth? sure it is neither by the amusements, nor by the business, nor by the prosperity of this world that life and immortality are to be obtained, but by piety towards God and charity towards men; if your past years were barren of those things, in whatever else they have been employed they will make but a comfortless appearance when they are reviewed from a death bed, or examined in that day in which you must give an account of your stewardship.

AND

AND I would more particularly advise you, before you begin the business of another year, to take a serious review of the days of the last, while they are yet fresh in your memory ; and hear what report they can give of your conduct. The time will come at last, in which you must hear them, whether you will or not ; they will speak of their own accord, and speak so loud, that the inhabitants of heaven, earth, and hell shall hear them. I hope in God few of them dare say, that they were entirely devoted to the world ; and its concerns, but that all of them must own, that at least they were begun and ended with a serious sense of the goodness, power, and providence, of God, and that the soul made some sallies from earth to heaven through the day.

EVERY day I hope will begin its history with saying that we bowed our knees, and lifted up our hearts to the most high God ; and when it takes notice of our going out into the world it will report too, that we carried out with us the dispositions of peace, justice, and charity, and that in all our transactions, we willingly hurt no man's person, wronged no man in his substance, nor wounded any in their reputations.

AND some happy days I hope will bear witness, that while they past over our heads, we relieved the
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needy, cloathed the naked, instructed the ignorant, reclaimed, or at least endeavoured to reclaim the vicious ; that we bore affronts with patience, forgave injuries with sincerity, and did good to those who used us despitefully ; and tho' every day have not some virtuous action to report, if the most barren of them can say no worse, than that after our duty paid to our creator and preserver, they were partly spent in the offices of our several functions, partly in necessary and innocent amusement, and that they left us prostrate before our God, imploring his pardon for our sins of infirmity, ignorance and negligence ; we may hear their report with pleasure, we may bid farewell to the exhausted year with a chearfull heart, and enter upon another with an easy mind, under no great concern about the events it may bring forth ; for God makes all things work together for the good of those that fear him.

BUT if instead of this, the days of the last year bear witness, that we began them as thoughtless of God, as the beasts that perish ; that we went out into the world with hearts eager with insatiable avarice, burning with lust, fraught with the arts of dissimulation, and cankered with envy ; and that after having spent them in gratifying these passions, we tumbled down to rest, as regardless of our maker as the
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brutes in the stalls; if any of them say that we invaded the rights of the fatherless, that we contrived the orphan's ruin, that we took advantage of the simplicity of the ignorant, the stranger's friendless condition, or the widow's helpless state; if they relate that they left us in the company of the drunkard, in the haunts of prostitution, or in the infamous assemblies in which gaming is made a trade; surely if we believe that there is a God above who sees our conduct, or a judge in heaven who will call us to an account for it, and give every one as his works shall be; we must part with the year with an heavy heart, and bid it farewell with a faltering tongue: for it is gone to give in a dreadful accompt against us.

IN fine such a review as I am recommending, will enable us to discover the plagues of our hearts, the thieves of our precious time, and the blemishes in our conduct. There is no man so innocent but has many things to amend, but how shall he amend his errors unless he knows them, or how shall he know them if he pass from year to year without reflection, and remains in the several periods of his life a stranger to himself.

BUT after all, if reformation does not follow this review, the profit of it is lost; new resolutions with

a new year, are no doubt commendable, but it is a new heart, a new life, a conduct really altered to the better, that perfect the plan, and answer the design of providence in prolonging our lives from year to year: and therefore whatever needs to be reformed, should be undertaken immediately, if you have done any injury to your neighbour that admits of reparation, if ye have contracted any bad habit that must be overcome, if you have any dangerous passion that should be subdued, as you wish for happiness, do not put off these things to another year; for next year will offer every excuse, urge every argument, and present every difficulty to persuade you to put off reformation, that the present can suggest: in the mean time the task will become more difficult, your heart will grow more averse to the change; time will insensibly wear away, and vain resolutions will end in eternal self reproaches. Begin the year then, with a sincere and thorough reformation of whatever is vicious in your hearts or criminal in your conduct, then shall ye be prepared for the several events that it may bring forth; if it bestows comforts ye will enjoy them with an higher relish; if it brings crosses you will encounter them with a firmer confidence in the assistance of heaven; whatever you lawfully undertake you will have greater reason to hope that the blessing of God will prosper

per your enterprizes; in fine, you shall pass its days with a lighter heart, and be fitter to live, and readier to die, as the wise providence of God shall please to determine.

THIS suggests another reflection with which we should begin our years, I mean the uncertainty of life: how many that are this day welcoming in the new year with thoughtless mirth and joy, shall never see it come to an end? how many heads that are now borne high, and busied with many a vain project shall be laid low in the dust before this day returns in the revolving year? nay what a damp would come over our spirits, what a mournful cry would be raised even in this assembly, if providence permitted us this moment to penetrate into the future, and to foresee the fate of ourselves and others, only to the end of this year? some of us who perhaps suppose death at a great distance, would see him at the very door; some who are dreaming of a long course of years yet to come, would find that they are already entered upon the very last year of life; some who are perplexing their minds, with *what shall I eat, or wherewithal shall I be clothed?* would see that their cares are very needless, and be convinced that they have already more food and raiment than ever they shall use.

OTHERS

OTHERS that are elevated with the prospect of some felicity that they expect, or depressed with the dread of misfortunes which they foresee, would find that they may lay their hopes and fears aside, because these things, if they come at all, will come too late to give them either pleasure or pain; we might perhaps see the eager worldling who sweats through the day, and schemes through the night, to hoard up wealth which he dares not use; who shuts his ears against the petitions of the poor, hardens his heart against the sufferings of the unfortunate, and hazards his soul for the sake of money, while he grudges his body a scanty subsistence; I say, we might perhaps see him, laid upon a death bed with all his bonds, and charters, and bags about him, and yet all unable to ease the pains of his body, or abate the foreboding apprehensions of his spirit; beset with drugs that could give no relief, with physicians that despaired of his life, with friends that in their faces wore the air of concern and sympathy, but in their hearts feared nothing so much as his recovery, unless it were that they should be overlooked in his last will; we might see them watching one another and teasing him, stifling every proposal of restitution, smothering every suggestion of charity, confounding every serious thought with questions about the world, and forcing him to die as he had lived;

lived, thoughtless of God and goodness, and full of the cares of the world; we might see him take his last sad farewell of his idols, and retain nothing of all his labour but a shroud and a coffin; while his heirs wrangled about the division of his wealth, or rioted in his spoils.

WE might perhaps see the man, who being flushed with youth, blest with health, and happy in a strong constitution, laughs at sobriety, ridicules temperance and chastity, and sets death and judgement not only at a distance, but even at defiance, we might perhaps see him on some future evening of this year gasping in the burning heat of a mortal fever, swelling in an inveterate dropsy, or making his shameful and painful exit, under that dreadful curse that God has entailed upon lust, while the remembrance of his folly awakened the most perplexing reflections, and the apprehensions of a future reckoning, made him wish that he had never been born.

IN fine, it is probable, that some of us will see the end of this year, and it is morally certain, that some of us will remove, and be in an eternal and unchangeable state, before it comes to an end; but who they are that shall survive, or who they are that must pass

pass the vale of the shadow of death, heaven wraps up in impenetrable secrecy, that all may be ready, watch, and be sober. But alas, as it is common for men to pervert the best blessings that God bestows, so we disappoint the design of this mysterious secrecy, for instead of being all quickened in our duty and kept upon our guard, because all are held in suspense, we are lulled asleep in security, because no particular person is named.

HERE we unhappily deviate from our common maxim in other cases, I mean, that it is best to err upon the safe side; for we could sustain no loss by living as if we were soon to die, tho' it did not happen, and preparing for our change as if it were to come before the end of the year, tho' we should chance to outlive it; but the loss is great and irretrievable if we err upon the other side; that is, if upon the supposition that death is at a distance, we postpone all preparation for our change, live secure, sensual, and wordly lives, and be surprised by death and judgement; yet tho' we are certain that some of us will remove before this year comes to an end, every individual silently supposes, that it shall not be himself; because he outlived the last year, he presumes he shall likewise outlive this; and because there are some who shall survive its end, he fondly believes that himself shall be one of the number.

SUCH

SUCH, very probably, at this time last year were the sentiments, of many of our friends and acquaintance, who are now in eternity; when all were exhorted to be ready, because surely some would remove; they as little thought that their deaths would fulfil the prediction, as you or I perhaps do this day; they had as few warnings from without, and as few forebodings within of their fate; and as far as youth, health, strength or temperance, can be any securities for life, many of them had as little reason to be alarmed, and as little cause to apply the prediction to themselves, as any of us have at present. But their fond hopes of life deceived them, and ours may do the same; their youth, their health, and strength, that promised them many years to come, performed their promise so ill, that their graves were green before that one year was out; and therefore, tho' they may be now making the same flattering promises to some of us, how vain and dangerous is it to trust them.

COULD thole now appear, who were thus deceived last year, how earnestly would they warn us against the delusion? how earnestly would they exhort us to be wise in time? and with what awful pathos would they urge our Saviour's advice, *be ye always ready, for ye know not in what hour the*

son of man cometh? and repeat Solomon's direction, whatsoever thine hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might, for there is neither work nor device in the grave whither thou goest. How eagerly would they beseech us, to beware of the deceitfulness of riches, the lusts of the flesh, and the pride of life? how earnestly would they adjure us to walk worthy of that vocation wherewith we are called? and how much would those of them who are happy, encourage our vigilance, enliven our diligence, and warm our minds with the love of virtue, while they narrated the happy state of the righteous in another world?

AND on the other hand, how much would the miserable part of them deterr us from security and procrastination? when they declared with a sigh, *Delays, unhappy delays, and a vain confidence in the continuance of life, were the causes of our ruin; we were resolved to repent and reform; we were determined before we died, to make our peace with God, by a thorough alteration in the dispositions of our hearts, and the conduct of our lives: But still we put off the change from year to year; and tho' we swiftly past from one period of our time to another, yet still we perswaded ourselves that there was time enough before us: O that mispent time could be recovered, or that the blessed invitation would but once*
again

again sound in our ears, Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out! Such as these are now the sad reflections of those, whom death surprized in a course of guilt and folly in the by gone year; and such as these will be our reflections, when this day returns if we remain unprepared for our change, and this year brings along with it, a secret commission to send us into an invisible world.

LASTLY, the transition from one year to another, should teach us moderation in prosperity, and patience in adversity; this is the improvement that *St. Paul* recommends from the reflection before us, *the time is short (says he) it remaineth that they that weep be as though they wept not, and they that rejoice as though they rejoiced not; they that buy as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it, for the fashion of this world passeth away.* Whatever advantages your wealth may bestow, whatever priviledges your rank in life may possess, whatever superiour accomplishments you may have, or imagine that you have, in body or mind, the time that you can enjoy these things is now shorter by one whole year; you are so much nearer to that awful period that brings men back to their natural equality; and so much nearer to that state, in which men shall rise according to their real

merit: and a whole year out of the short life of man, is no inconsiderable trifle, much less out of what now remains of that life, to many of us; and the reflection that you yesterday bade farewell to one twentieth, or one tenth part of the time that you are like to have to enjoy those transient distinctions that raise you above other men, should convince you that they are so much diminished in real value; and consequently that all pride upon their account, is so much more unreasonable.

THE same thought on the other hand, should support the sinking spirits of the afflicted: of whatever kind the ills may be, with which you struggle, they are now nearer an end, by one whole year; you are sure there is so much of the time past, but are not certain whether there be so much now remaining; and whatever there may be yet before you, a little patience will wear it all out, as entirely as it has done the past year; in a word, the prosperous have gained nothing in this world, that they shall not shortly lose; nor the unfortunate suffered any thing, that they shall not soon forget, nor lost any thing, that by the grace of God they may not still hope to regain: for both are hastening to that period, in which it will fare with us, as to the things of this world, much as it did with the Israelites

Israelites in gathering the manna, *he that hath succeeded best, shall carry nothing away with him, and he who hath gathered little shall have no lack.*

Let us not be discouraged by the words of the text, which represent man as *a thing of nought*; such indeed *he is*, when viewed only in respect to his present existence; but when we look forward to another world, and view him as he *shall be*, the prospect is very different. Here, he is the sport of passions which he finds it very difficult to restrain; subject to a variety of diseases which he can neither prevent nor cure; liable to innumerable accidents against which his foresight cannot provide; and immersed in a body which is a clog upon his mind, and greatly retards his progress in virtue. But, *when corruption shall put on incorruption*, all the dregs of mortality shall be left behind; our faculties will be enlarged; our desires pure; our spirits active and serene; our benevolence without alloy; and our happiness *such as eye hath not seen, ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive.*

I SHALL sum up these reflections with my sincerest prayers, that God may through this year preserve your substance from accidents, your families

milies from misfortunes; your bodies from sickness, and your souls from guilt; that he may dispose the hearts of the young to remember their creator in the days of their youth, and give grace to the old to prepare for their change, and finish their course with joy; that he may fit those for death and judgement, whom he designs to remove into another world, and grant those whom he shall be pleased to continue in this, wisdom to improve their time, and hearts truly grateful for all his goodness; grant these things O most gracious God, for Jesus Christ's sake Amen.

Thankfulness



Thankfulness to God recommended, for
The continuance of his Benefits.

A

S E R M O N

Preached on New-Year's-Day.

PSALM CIII. ver. 1st. 2d. 3d. and 4th.

*Bless the Lord O my soul, and all that is within me bless
his holy name; bless the Lord O my soul and forget not
all his benefits, who forgiveth all thine iniquities, healeth all
thy diseases, who redeemeth thy life from destruction, and
crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercy.*

MAN is so heedless by nature, so intoxicated
with the pleasures, or so hurried with the bu-
siness of the world, that he seldom thinks of the
course of divine providence, while it proceeds
smoothly, and from day to day continues pouring
blessings upon him: he receives its gifts without a
sense of their value; he enjoys them without grati-
tude to the being from whom they came; he pre-
sumes

fumes upon their continuance, as if they were things of course; and when they are taken from him, frets and repines as if he suffered some flagrant injustice, or were wrongfully deprived of his right. The truth is, he seldom thinks upon the value of enjoyments till he comes to want them; he never reflects upon what he has already received, but fixes his whole attention upon what he wants, or wishes to obtain; and as soon as any blessing loses the graces of novelty, it falls in its value in his opinion, and soon wears out of his memory.

HEAR a sick man talk of the blessings of health; how feelingly does he express himself, how warmly does he recommend to those who enjoy it, caution and gratitude, and how seriously does he resolve that he will prize the mercy, if he should happily recover? attend him the first day in which he goes abroad after a tedious confinement, and you will find that the sun shines brighter to him, the fields smell sweeter, the birds sing more melodiously; in fine all nature wears a more charming aspect than it was wont to do; and the goodness and wisdom of the creator of all things affect his heart more strongly, and warm his gratitude more effectually, than perhaps they have done before in all his life. But in a few weeks when the blessing
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is become familiar, and his heart engaged in other pursuits; you will hear very little of the value of health; he will eat and drink, rise and lie down, without ever thinking of the blessings of food, sleep, and precious health; he will see the sun in his brightness, the earth in its verdure, the firmament and stars in all their lustre and majesty, and the world in all its order and beauty, without ever reflecting upon the power and wisdom that erected it, or feeling one emotion of gratitude, or reverence in his heart.

HEAR a poor man talking of the uses to which he would apply riches, how generous are his schemes, how extensive his charity, and how intense the satisfaction he would feel in doing good? you would imagine, that like Job, he would be eyes to the blind, feet to the lame, a father to the fatherless, and an husband to the widow; and that as far as his influence could reach, tears would be wiped away from every eye; you can hardly help blaming providence that has not given him ability equal to his will, and entrusted him with those blessings of which he would be such a faithful steward, and for which he is so well disposed to make a grateful return. But notwithstanding all this, if you carefully
D observe

observe his conduct, you shall find that his will in his present circumstances, falls often short of his ability, little as it is; grant him that wealth which he proposes to employ to well, yet distress will appear in his neighbourhood as commonly, and in all the various shapes that it did before; for his charity expired with his poverty, he ceased to sympathize with the sufferers, when he ceased to feel their ills; he now finds vent for his wealth, where other rich men found it before him, in the luxury of the table, in the vanity of dress and equipage, in the expences of amusements, and the extravagance of gaming and company; nay, it is much if he does not distinguish himself by hardness of heart, rapacious oppression, haughtiness of behaviour, and in fine, by all the vices most diametrically opposite to his former professions.

It seems to be the unhappy foible of our nature, that when we want any blessing, we have high ideas of its value, we know how it should be employed, and what returns should be made for it to the supreme being; but as soon as we obtain it, we grow insensible of its worth, we forget its proper use, and seldom think of the kindness and mercy of the providence that bestowed and continues it.

it. I wish there be not many examples of this truth here present, we have ended a year in which we have enjoyed many valuable blessings, and begun another, in which we hope for their continuance; have we ended it with a just sense of the goodness of God upon our minds; with sincere acknowledgements for the various benefits we enjoyed during its course; with hearts overflowing with gratitude towards our unwearied benefactor; and full of serious resolutions to reform what is wrong in our conduct, and improve in what is right?

HAVE we like the Psalmist in the hymn before us, roused all the powers and exerted all the faculties of our souls to acknowledge his kindness? has every one, with sincere feelings of thankfulness expressed his dependance upon the preserver of men, in words like these, *bless the Lord O my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name; bless the Lord O my soul and forget not all his benefits, who forgiveth all thine iniquities, healeth all thy diseases, who redeemeth thy life from destruction, who crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercy?* These, or something like these, ought to have been the sentiments, with which we should have closed the last, and entered upon the present year.

IN order to assist them whose serious thoughts have already warmed their gratitude to God, for his numerous benefits, and also to try if I can suggest some useful reflections to those who are more heedless, who enjoy the blessings that heaven bestows, without thinking of their design, and pass from year to year, as if the succession of time was to be eternal, and the course of their years to proceed without interruption; I have chosen for my text the verse that I have read before you; and in further discoursing upon this subject, shall mention some of the many blessings which we have enjoyed through the bygone year, that seem to me to deserve our most grateful acknowledgements, now that it is come to an end.

FIRST then, as life is the foundation of all earthly enjoyments, let us begin with asking ourselves, by what peculiar privilege ours has been preserved for so many months, notwithstanding the complicate texture, weakness, and delicacy of the organs of those bodies in which we dwell; notwithstanding the many diseases that have been raging around us, and the innumerable accidents to which the life of man is exposed? And this too, when many younger in years, stronger in constitution, healthier in their former lives, and as sober and cautious as we, have
dropped,

dropped since the year began ; look around you in your seats, and you will find that severals have been removed into another world, who, whether we judged by the strength of their frame, the number of their years, the ordinary state of their health, or their way and manner of living, promised as long life as any here present ; by what peculiar privilege then are we met in the house of God, when others are removed to another world ? what secret cause has borne us up above the dust, when others have sunk down to corruption ? Is it because there are no jarring humours in our bodies, no seeds of diseases in our frame ? alas the experience of every day shews the contrary, and makes us know by the feebleness and pains we feel, that we are made of no more durable materials than other men.

Is it that we have a lease of life, or that we have made a covenant with death, not to approach before a certain day ? or is it that we are more thankful to heaven, and employ life to better purposes than they did who are removed ? partial as our judgements are in what concerns ourselves, I believe we will not venture to affirm this, nor even dare to imagine it. Perhaps that gracious advocate which we have with the father, has stopt the hand of justice, when it was lifted up to strike, with,
Let

*Let it alone this year also, if it brings forth fruit, well; if not let it be cut down; perhaps that God who willeth not the death of a sinner, seeing us unprepared has deferred the summons, to give us time for reflection and reformation, if so be that time and repeated benefits; can bring us to a right mind; and if not, to allow us to fill up the measure of our iniquity, and to render us without excuse; perhaps some dawnings, as it were, of seriousness and reflection in our minds, and some appearance of an alteration in our conduct to the better, has induced the merciful God to postpone our fate, with something like, *seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself? I will not quench the smoking flax; but wait and see what effects such beginnings may produce; perhaps the prayers of a virtuous parent, or the requests of some religious friend, has been heard in heaven in our behalf; perhaps the fervent blessing of some pious poor object whom we have relieved, has lighted upon our heads.**

BUT whatever the cause may be, so it is that we have been spared, when a thousand have fallen at our side, and ten thousand at our right hand; our time has been prolonged, when some others have received an hasty summons, and the invitations of grace and mercy, are still sounding in our ears,
when

when perhaps others who began the year with us, are now in vain desiring to see one of the days of the son of man, and wishing that the time of their probation might return.

To make us more sensible of the value of the benefit, let us seriously consider how it should have fared with us, if providence had been pleased to order otherwise; were our worldly affairs settled? were our consciences clear enough to bear the examination of omniscient wisdom? were our souls prepared for the awful change, and ready to appear in judgement? I suspect, if the sentence had come forth in any part of the by gone year, *set thine house in order, for thou shalt surely die*, that the best of us would have earnestly wished for a suspension of it, and many of us looked back upon life with much regret, and forward to eternity with very faint hopes. With what gratitude then should we acknowledge the goodness of God in prolonging our lives? with what care should we avoid every thing that may tend to make our benefactor repent of our preservation, in the same sense that he once did of our creation, and say, *it repenteth me that I kept them alive?* with what diligence should *we work out our salvation, and give glory to the Lord our God, before he cause darkness, and before our feet stumble upon the*

the dark mountains, and our light be turned into the shadow of death.

THO' he has prolonged our lives, yet he has given us no lease of them, no not so much as for another year; and tho' we are here all alive this day, yet some of us shall have passed through the terrors of death, and the inquisition of judgement, before this day returns, and be singing anthems, with the blest above, or howling blasphemies with the damned beneath, when the world is welcoming another year; for society is in a constant fluctuation, one coming upon the stage to begin his probation, another going off to receive according to the deeds done in the body; and the generation of the present period insensibly mouldering away.

IF an old man reflects upon those with whom he lived in his youth, he will find that he is already among another people; that new men have risen up, new maxims have been received, and other manners have prevailed; in so much, that had he not made his acquaintance with the new comers, he must have been literally a stranger upon earth; and so quickly do the sons of men pass away, that by the time this season has returned forty or fifty times, another people shall be listening here to another

another preacher; and we shall be gone every one to his own place, or if any poor remains survive, they will be feeble and few, *like the gleaning grapes when the vintage is done*; our houses shall be possessed by other owners, and those who are yet unborn, shall be bustling in our streets, acting over our follies, or inventing new ones of their own; while we shall be reaping the fruits of our present conduct, and receiving according to our works in the days of our flesh; and therefore let us be thankful to God for prolonging our lives, employ our time well, and seriously prepare for our change.

BUT, besides this signal instance of the goodness of God in preserving us in life, through the by-gone year, we have many other blessings, requiring our grateful acknowledgment upon this occasion: to many of you, your friends have been preserved, and your families kept entire: no parent has been pulled from your embraces; no consort has been torn from your bosom; no child has been snatched from your knee, your hearts have been free from grief, and your eyes from tears; you have not known the pangs of a last farewell, you have not felt the painful workings of the mind, when the relicks of a dear relation revive his memory, and his empty place at table proclaims his absence; you

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have

have not experienced the agonizing feelings of the spirit, when the thoughts stray as it were among blasted prospects, and ruined hopes, and every where meet with the ghosts of departed comforts; would you know the value of this blessing? ask those who have been deprived of their friends, at what price they would purchase their redemption from death, and what they would give for their discharge from the grave?

SUPPOSE that when you go home, instead of a chearful welcome from a beloved consort, or a fond embrace from a darling child, you found only loneliness and silence; here and there a monument to keep you in mind, that once they were there, and revive the reflection that now they are forever gone. Surely if you consider the importance of this blessing, instead of ending your years with levity, you will convene your families, present them, as it were, before the Lord, gratefully thank him for their preservation, humbly implore pardon for their sins, and earnestly pray for the continuance of his kind providence.

BUT to proceed, some of you perhaps he has raised from sickness, and when the physician hesitated in hopes, when your friends confessed their
despair

despair by their looks, when the struggling heart and feeble pulse gave the symptoms of a near dissolution, he has graciously said, *I will, be thou whole*. Some of you perhaps he has preserved at sea, when your souls melted away because of trouble; when every swelling wave threatned to dash the cracking vessel into a wreck, and every yawning gulph seemed to be jaws of death, just going to close upon you; when the pilot, at his wits end, gave up his charge to the mercy of the storm, and bade the despairing crew prepare for eternity; in fine when all hope that you should be saved was taken away, he graciously heard your cries, pitied your distress, made the storm a calm, and brought you unto your desired haven; when you were thus upon the brink of eternity, what would you not have given for an assurance of seeing this day? what were your thoughts of your past lives? what were your resolutions with respect to your future conduct, and how warm your professions of endless gratitude, and sincere obedience, if God should bring you back from the gates of death? he did so: let your consciences tell the rest: but remember that he has it in his power every moment to bring you again to the brink of destruction, to range before you the terrors of death, and force you to review your conduct as just going to appear in judgement:

and he will at length bring you to this, when neither prayers, nor tears, nor fair professions of future obedience shall procure a reprieve, and when providence designs to execute upon you the sentence, *It is determined for all men once to die.*

ADD to these instances of his goodness, the reflection, that he has so blessed your endeavours through the last year, that all of you have been able to provide for your families, and some of you perhaps to increase your store; no fire has consumed your substance at land, no loss at sea has ruined your credit, and no unhappy accident has hitherto thrown you upon the cold compassion and charity of an unfeeling selfish world. To be independent, as far as independency is designed for man, to live by the blessing of God, and our own industry, to eat our own bread and have something to spare to those that want, will appear very valuable blessings, if we consider the pain that a generous mind feels in asking assistance; the sting of a cold reception, the pang that is occasioned by a frivolous far-fetched excuse, the damp that comes upon the spirits from an harsh denial, or a compliance attended with reproaches; and the agony that the mind experiences in being obliged to court one's kindness, in whose face you can read indifference, and

and see, by every look, that he thinks you troublesome and importunate.

WHILE God is pleased to bless your endeavours with success, while his candle continues to shine upon your head, you will find tenderness and affection in your friends, and civility and kindness from your acquaintance, but had heaven been pleased in any part of the last year to have afflicted you with a severe reverse of fortune, your fate would have been very singular, if you had not by this time found reason to say with Job, *mine acquaintances are estranged from me, my kinsfolk have failed, and my familiar friends have forgotten me*; for tho' poverty be not infectious, yet few diseases so much cool the affections of friends and acquaintance or induce them to keep at a greater distance; *The rich man has many friends but the poor is hated of his neighbour*; instead of the kindness that they perhaps now shew, and that affection they profess, one would have imputed your misfortune to your mismanagement; another ascribed it to your profusion; a third perhaps dared to explain the secret dispensations of providence, and to say, it was a just judgement for some of your real or imaginary faults; and every one assigned some cause why you deserved

deserved to be unfortunate, and why he might treat you with cruelty and indifference.

GOD has been graciously pleased for one year more to preserve you from all those ills, and if you desire that he would continue to do so, shew yourselves grateful to him for what is past, and charitable to the poor of his people; *for there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty*, on the contrary, *the liberal soul shall be made fat, he deviseth liberal things, and by liberal things shall he stand*; in fine, to receive God's benefits with gratitude, to enjoy them with moderation, to employ them for the relief of the poor and destitute, are the most likely methods to prevail with him, to preserve you from poverty and dependence during life, and to procure for you his approving sentence, *well done good and faithful servant*, when ye shall be called to give an account of your stewardship.

You have also during last year by his kind providence enjoyed all the comforts of religion, you have had free access to publick worship, regular opportunities of hearing the word of God, and partaking of his holy sacraments, and your pastors ready to assist you with their advice and prayers, in sorrow, sickness, or at the hour of death; these blessings

blessings indeed, because, thanks to God, they are common; cost us little; and have continued long, are but little valued; but they are blessings that in spite of our present indifference we would sigh for if they were withdrawn; blessings that the first Christians would have purchased at an high price; and which God himself seems to reckon among his choicest favours, for when he promises by the prophet Isaiah to be very gracious to his people, and mentions the various blessings that he meant to bestow upon them, he begins with declaring, *thy teachers shall not be removed into a corner any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers, and thine ear shall hear a word behind thee saying, this is the way walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand or to the left.*

WHEN he threatens to punish them most severely, for their sins, and make their affliction deep as the mourning for an only son, he declares by the prophet Amos, *I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the word of God; they shall run to and fro to hear the word of the Lord, and shall not find it; in truth if we believe that iniquity is ruinous, we must account it a mercy to be frequently exhorted to goodness, and warned against the deceitful charms of vice; if we believe that the ordinances of religion were ap-
pointed*

pointed by God, as the means of our improvement and salvation, we must also allow that it is a blessing to enjoy them; if we experience any comforts in publick worship; feel that it enlivens our devotion, or has any happy effects upon our hearts, it certainly follows that we should be grateful to God for the benefit, and pray for its continuance: in a word, whatever improvement we may make of these things, and however little they may be esteemed in a thoughtless age, yet they are blessings that we shall one day be called to an account for, and which we shall in the end sincerely wish we had highly valued, and diligently improved.

ALLOW me further to add, that our most grateful acknowledgements, are due to the divine providence, for that tranquility that our country has enjoyed through the last year: in the midst of a vigorous and bloody war we enjoyed almost all the sweets of peace, and while our ears tingled with the bare report of those scenes of cruelty and desolation, that were exhibited in other countries, we rose and lay down in peace; no barbarous ruffians have broken in upon our defenceless families, no midnight alarms have disturbed our rest; no parties have plundered our houses, or foraged our fields; no marks of desolation are imprinted on our country; and no
monuments

monuments of an enemy's fury appear in our cities; thanks to God every one has reaped the fruits of his labour in quiet, and our country wears the same face that it did in the profoundest peace.

NOR can we ascribe this to any moderation or want of activity, or inclination in our enemies to disturb our tranquility, they mustered their armies, they prepared their fleets, they boasted of designed invasions; and gracious heaven in one hour blasted all their projects and humbled their pride†. In fine he has through all the last year indulged us with his choicest blessings, I mean the profoundest peace, the greatest plenty, and an healthy people; if we desire the continuance of his mercy, let us be sincerely grateful, and carefully avoid every thing that may provoke him to withdraw his mercies. Could I add to the blessings of his providence, all the instances of his long suffering patience, the subject would be inexhaustible, for the benefits that he has bestowed, tho' they be many, are not near so numerous as the sins and provocations he has overlooked in every one of us; how often have we offended him in thought, word, and deed, since the last year began? yet as if we had been always dutiful servants, and obedient children, he continued from day to

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† This sermon was preached after the defeat of the French fleet commanded by M. Conflans.

day pouring his blessings upon us, and is still willing to forgive and receive us into favour.

HAVE you at any time through the year, blasphemed his sacred name, or appealed to his omniscience when you swore falsely? he was present to hear your perjury, and to witness the affront you offered to his majesty, he had power to take immediate vengeance, nay he needed only to have withdrawn his assistance and you had crumbled down to your original dust, yet you are still permitted to come into his courts, still invited to *acquaint yourselves with God and be at peace.*

DID you at any time defraud or cheat your neighbour? he saw the villainy and detested it; why did not his overruling providence bring you to disgrace, condemnation, and an ignominious death, or hurry you from the scene of guilt to the seat of judgment? surely no reason can be assigned, but *that he willeth not the death of a sinner, and that he is the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering and abundant in goodness and truth*: have you at any time slandered your neighbour, or designedly deviated from sacred truth? you know he has declared that all liars shall have their portion in that lake which burneth with fire and brimstone; why
- then

then are ye not tormented in that flame that is not quenched, and crying for a drop of water to cool your tongues?

MUCH more may we ask why are you solicited to accept of pardon and peace, with *repent and be converted that your sins may be blotted out?* the the wit of man can think of no other reason but *that God is patient, tho' he be provoked every day;* you remember that he has declared, that *whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgement, and whosoever shall say to his brother thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire;* how often have many of us been exposed to this danger through the bygone year by much greater crimes? such as malice, envy, dissimulation and the like; in fine upon a serious review of our conduct, we shall find that we have as much reason to admire the mercies of his patience, as those of his providence, and while we acknowledge with gratitude, *in him we live and move and have our being,* to add with sorrow, *it is of the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, and because his compassions fail not, that we are in the land of the living, and in the place of hope.*

BUT remember too, that his spirit will not always strive with man, and that tho he has borne with us through the last year, he may not continue the same patience during this; but if we persevere in our vicious courses, he may be provoked, to issue out the dreadful sentence, *cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?*

THE inference that I would draw from what has been said, is that observation of the Apostle, *the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance*, or that of the Psalmist, *O that men would therefore praise the Lord for his goodness, and declare the wonders that he doeth for the children of men*: begin the year with a serious sense of his goodness upon your minds, with resolutions of obedience, and earnest prayers that he may continue his blessings, and grant you hearts truly grateful.

MAY that God by whose providence years begin and end, bless your substance with increase, your families with health, and yourselves with inward peace and satisfaction through the present year; may he sanctify your hearts, govern your tongues, keep your hands from iniquity, and preserve you in life, or receive you into glory; grant these things O merciful father for Christ's sake. *Amen.*

The



The Vanity and transitory Nature of
Worldly Enjoyments.

A

S E R M O N

Preached upon the death of his late Majesty
GEORGE the II.

II. CHRON. XXXV 24.

And all Judah and Jerusalem wept for Josiah.

IF ever grief for men that are born to die can be reasonable, it must be so, when the providence of God is pleased to remove good kings; their station is so important, their number so small, and their example so useful to the world, that their departure is a severe and affecting loss to society. When a king maintains the civil and religious liberties of his people; when he executes the laws with

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with impartiality, and by the blessing of God upon his councils and arms, protects them from their enemies, and leaves them a free and happy nation, they can hardly withhold the grateful tribute of a tear at parting, nor miss to feel some unusual concern on their minds, not only because they have lived happily under his administration, but also because they know not what new measures new men may pursue, and with what consequences the loss of their sovereign may be attended.

INDEED it is not to be expected in the present imperfection of human nature, that kings can avoid errors; their province is difficult; their capacities are limited; and their temptations many: when they discover no cruelty in their tempers, when they betray no designs to oppress or enslave their people, nor lavish away their blood and treasures, in order to aggrandize themselves or their families; but discover in all their transactions an humane and merciful temper, and an honest and upright heart, their memory ought to be dear to their people, and their smaller errors overlooked, or ascribed to the general weakness of men.

SUCH a prudent, peaceable, and just prince, did the Jews lose by the death of Josiah, and the loss
could

could not miss to be the more severely felt that he was taken away by a sudden death, and left them involved in an expensive and dangerous war. The passage of scripture that I have read before you, bears witness, that they paid a grateful tribute to his memory, and had a just sense of his merit, and their own misfortune in being deprived of such a sovereign.

THESE nations have now by the will of God, sustained a misfortune of the same kind, with some circumstances very similar, and lost a prince under whose administration we have long enjoyed the valuable blessings of a pure religion, and an happy liberty; frequently tasted the sweets of peace; and had as great security for our persons and properties as any people under heaven: a prince in whose time it has pleased God to bless our fields with increase; our trade with success; and our arms with victory; so that he has left us improving in all the necessary, and useful arts of life, and as much respected among the nations as any people in this western part of the world. That his memory is dear, and his death lamented, is indeed very evident, but I would wish for something more; as we enjoyed many blessings by the means of his life, I could wish that we received some improvement by his

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his death, and therefore instead of panegyricks upon the dead, who is now independent of the praise or censure of mortals, I shall try to suggest some reflections upon the event that I hope may be useful to the living.

FIRST then, allow me to observe, that we have here a very striking example of the precarious nature of all worldly things; his crown and throne were secured to him with all the solemnity and sanctity of laws; by all the strength of powerful fleets and numerous armies; and by what was still a better security, by the affection and willing submission of a great and free people: yet one fatal moment transferred his crown and throne to another possessor, and left him no more of his extensive dominions than his corps can cover. How eloquently does the event preach to us upon the text, *if riches increase, set not your heart upon them, for they make themselves wings and fly away.* Are there any possessions you enjoy, or any you can acquire that you can hold by a surer tenure? you have indeed laws to protect your property from violence, you perhaps have shrewdness to guard it against the arts of fraud, and friends or money to vindicate your rights if they be invaded; but what have you to guard your persons against the assaults

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of death, or secure your souls that they shall not be summoned to appear in judgement? here you must always be exposed to the greatest uncertainty; and consequently it must be extreme folly to sacrifice the peace of your consciences, or forfeit your future hopes, for enjoyments that are so precarious; perhaps when you have just drawn upon your heads, by oppression, the widow's deserved curse; when the distressed orphan is appealing to God against your injustice; when you have newly wounded your conscience by dishonesty, and roused the just vengeance of heaven by some villainy in order to increase your wealth; or when you are rejoicing over your prey; summing up the accounts of your money, or surveying the extent of your estate, and saying in your hearts, *soul take thine ease, eat drink and be merry, thou hast goods laid up for many years*; the destined hour may be come; the commissioned angel of death may strike the fatal blow; and your connection with this world be dissolved at once: then the satisfactions that you expected from the increase of your wealth will be blasted for ever, you will awaken from the delusion like one from a pleasing dream, and find nothing remaining of all your iniquitous acquisitions, but the remembrance of guilt, the reproaches of

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a self condemning conscience; and the dreadful expectation of approaching punishment.

IN fact, these are the only fruits that a man can be sure of reaping from oppression, fraud and injustice; he may promise himself gain and be disappointed; he may flatter himself that he shall escape discovery, and yet be found out; he may hope to transmit a larger inheritance to his children and fail in his intention; he may promise himself a thousand enjoyments from the success of his schemes, one of which he may never find, but he may be sure that happen what will, they shall produce guilt, and undoubtedly end in the reproaches of his own heart, and the restless apprehensions of future sufferings. Supposing the cheat and thief were sure to escape with impunity from men, and to enjoy the fruits of their villainy, for the ordinary term that nature allows to the life of man, I mean three score or four score years, yet still it would be great folly to lose the satisfactions of innocence, the pleasing prospect of future happiness, while they are here, and the approbation of God and joys of eternity when they remove, for enjoyments that must be so wholly and entirely parted with at the end of this short existence. But how much more unaccountable must the folly appear when

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we consider that they are not sure of possessing them for a year, a month, a day, no not for an hour; the loss of them may so swiftly succeed the possession, that in the strictest sense they may have nothing *more than the seeing of them with their eyes*; the punishment may so soon follow the crime, that the joy occasioned by the unrighteous acquisition may be scarcely felt, **when** the pain of an eternal repentance may begin. Surely no man would bear the thoughts of that baseness that is inherent in fraud and dishonesty; stand the reproaches of his conscience revolting against his practices; suffer the painful workings of that fear of discovery with which villainy is haunted; and above all, brave the threatnings and vengeance of a just God; if he were not deluded with the fond hopes of enjoying the fruits of his unrighteousness for years, and deceived by the flattering expectation of much happiness from the possession of those things, which he is labouring to acquire; but did he attend to the many chances that are against him in both cases, did he know the value of that peace of conscience which he is sure to lose by the purchase, could he conceive how heavy a base action shall ly upon his spirits, when he comes to die, and with what a dreadful aspect it will rise up against him in judgement; he could not miss to be convinced that his

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fraud and dishonesty would at last fall heaviest on himself.

FURTHER, this event not only shews how precarious all the enjoyments of this world are, but also how insignificant they prove, and what little help they can afford when we stand most in need of relief. The ensigns of royalty; the vigilance of guards; the skill of physicians; or the power of gold cannot render kings immortal, as it is determined by the king of kings for all men once to die, no nor so much as procure them the privilege not to be hurried out of the world in haste, or exempt them from one disease of body, or one trouble of mind that common men are subject to. The prince in his palace is treated by death with no more tenderness and ceremony, than the peasant in his hut, his time is as uncertain; his agonies as severe, his convulsions as strong; his groans as deep; and his features as much distorted as those of his meanest subjects; while he lies expiring, he finds no more comfort from his high station, and when he removes, he carries nothing more away with him than he that depended upon charity for his daily bread.

OUR late sovereign might have been reckoned
among

among the greatest kings, whether you considered the amount of his revenue; the number of his subjects; or the strength of his forces by sea and land; yet what relief or assistance could all these afford him in the end? all the sums in his treasury could not purchase for him one hour's reprieve, none of his forces could fight for him in this warfare; none of his attendants could accompany him through the vale of the shadow of death, nor any of his subjects appear for him at the supreme tribunal. There is, there is a period before us all, in which nothing but God, and a well spent life can bestow comfort. One virtuous action, one poor man relieved in his distress; one snatched from the iron teeth of oppression; was then of greater importance to him than all his extensive dominions; from actions like these he now will reap more real advantage, think the time employed about them better spent; and reflect upon them with more pleasure, than all the power, wealth and honour, he enjoyed during his long and prosperous reign; for when all things else have deserted him, his good deeds will stick by him.

AND this should teach us, that nothing upon earth is so much to be prized as virtue, because nothing can disappoint us of the happy fruits of doing well;

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well; if we have riches they must be left behind; if we have power it must be resigned, if we have titles they must be transferred to our successors, if we have friends they too must be parted with, if we have beauty it shall be lost, when our *countenance is changed and we are sent away; but blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, for they rest from their labours and their works follow them.* Virtue and vice are the only things that we can acquire in this world, and carry along with us to that which is to come. But alas! men are thoughtless of these things in life, the practice of virtue is attended with some difficulty, it sometimes requires the mortification of our passions and appetites, at others the sacrifice of some worldly interest, and always needs vigilance and application; vice on the other hand has its charms, sometimes it courts us with the promise of pleasure, and sometimes deceives us with the prospect of gain; and thoughtless men unhappily prefer a present, tho' precarious enjoyment obtained with ease, to a distant certain happiness that must be earned by self denial and industry.

BUT when the approach of death discovers the worthlessness and fleeting nature of all the enjoyments that vice has to bestow, they would then retract their choice, and wish in vain that God would
reverse

reverse the order which he has established in the universe, *that misery should follow wickedness*, and grant them to enjoy the rewards of virtue in another world, tho' they have devoted themselves to the pleasures of vice in this; but if they will have its sweets they must take its bitter dregs also; if they decline the difficulties of virtue in life, they must not expect its rewards in another world. In fine death is the faithful mirror, that sets the worthlessness and instability, of worldly things in a true light, it removes all prejudices; rectifies all our mistakes; dissolves the whole enchantment; and does in a few hours, what the experience of an age has not been able to effect, that is, impresses the heart with a serious and thorough conviction that all but piety towards God, and goodness towards men, is vanity and vexation of spirit.

IT must at last fare with us all in this respect, as it did with our late sovereign, we shall come to a period, in which our houses and lands, our money in our coffers, or bonds and charters in our chests, can afford no assistance, no comfort, no relief; when they can neither keep us in this world, nor be carried with us into another; neither assuage the pains of the body, nor quiet the fears of the soul, and when we shall think ourselves prosperous, or
otherwise

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otherwise, not according to the largeness, or narrowness of our fortune, but according to the means we have used in acquiring it, the uses to which we applied it, and the temper of mind with which we possessed what we had, whether it has been little or much.

IF we have bestowed the superfluities of an abundant fortune for the encouragement of religion and virtue, and for the relief of the distressed, or borne the ills of narrow circumstances with patience, and contentment; if we have been thankful to God for what he gave, and useful to our neighbours, according to our ability; tho' the enjoyments of the world desert us we shall not be forsaken, but find comfort and happiness more exquisite than they could bestow. But if the enjoyments of this world have been obtained by injustice; employed in luxury, or the schemes of oppression; and fostered pride and insolence in the heart; when the fatal moment comes in which they shall be withdrawn, we shall find ourselves poor and comfortless indeed.

WE may further learn from this event the folly and unreasonableness of pride, in a world where all the advantages of birth, fortune, and office, come so soon and so entirely to an end! A few days ago our late sovereign was the source from which all
honours

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honours and preferment flowed ; was approached with reverence, and served with all the marks of respect ; he had every thing that ordinarily elevates the hearts of men, descended from a long race of illustrious princes, possessor of powerful kingdoms, triumphing over his enemies, and numbered among the gods upon earth ; yet he has died, and must go to the grave, and be food for worms, like a common man : his corps indeed may lie in state, his burial may be magnificent, and his subjects may pay all those honours to his memory, that his rank demands, and his happy administration deserved ; but he is insensible to all these honours, and the beggar that has been huddled into his grave in private, without a shroud or coffin, shall lie as soft, and sleep as sound, under a green sod, and if he has been as pious and virtuous shall rise as great and happy as he : death brings men back to their original equality, and destroys all the little distinctions that the pride of men, or necessities of society have introduced ; a sick bed is as wearisome to a sovereign as it is to his subjects ; his countenance is as much changed by death ; corruption appears as early on his corps, the worm feeds on his flesh with as little ceremony, and his dust is as much confounded with the common earth, as that of the meanest of mankind.

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THE truth is, we are so much upon an equality when we first appear in the world, and when we remove out of it; we come here in such a helpless state, we depart with so many humbling circumstances, and the time that intervenes is so short and precarious, and even to the most prosperous, so full of vanity and vexation; that the mind must be equally little and inconsiderate, that is puffed up with any advantages that we enjoy in this world, *the fashion of which passeth away*; what ever differences may be at present of fortune, rank or office, threescore, or fourscore years, which pass away like a shadow, shall bring us all again to a level: the beggar that you serve at your door, may be laid down at your side, his ashes may mix in the same clod with yours, and your bones be scattered with his about the pit; and when that powerful voice, that spoke the world into existence, shall say, *come again ye children of men; arise ye dead and come to judgement*; his poverty shall be no bar to his acceptance with God, nor your rank or fortune any recommendation, when the secrets of hearts shall be disclosed; for God is no respecter of persons, but in every station they who fear him and work righteousness are accepted with him.

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IN a word, what we are in life, is of so short duration, and what each may be in another existence is so uncertain, that the enjoyments of this world, should not encourage pride in those who have, nor raise envy and discontent in those who want them; the first should be humble because all the superior advantages they enjoy, shall soon come to an end; and the last patient, because a deliverance from all the ills they suffer now, is at hand.

FROM the event before us, we may likewise learn the necessity of living always as we would wish to die; the morning that proved the last to our late sovereign, gave no warning that it carried such an awful commission, he had no whispers from without, no foreboding within, of his approaching fate; his fleets scoured the seas; his armed guards stood round his palace gates; and every danger was seemingly at a distance; yet an invisible enemy was near, soon found access, and suddenly struck the fatal blow; vain was the vigilance of his guards, the valour of his troops, and the skill of his physicians, and vain the wishes of a numerous people; the summons came from him, whom kings must obey, and manifested the truth of the Psalmist's observation, *no king is saved by the multitude of an host.* And if those gods upon earth are not se-

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cure against an hasty summons, what have meaner men to depend upon, that they live in a thoughtless security; continue from day to day in their vicious courses; and seem to banish from their breasts all sense of mortality, all thoughts of judgment, and all preparation for another world.

THE uncertainty in which we live with respect to death, is wisely designed by God, to keep us upon our guard against the allurements of vice, and render us diligent in the practice of virtue; for did we know when, where, and how, we were to die, we would sin with more security, be more deaf to all the exhortations of religion, and more disposed (if possible) to postpone all preparation for our change; the robber for instance would attack with more courage, the thief would steal with more confidence; the drunkard would be delivered from the fear that nature may sink under his debauchery; and all the vicious and profligate part of mankind would be still more hardened in villainy.

BUT God by a conduct wise and merciful keeps us in suspense, that the uncertainty of life may be a check upon the vicious inclinations, an encouragement to patience, and a powerful motive to induce us to begin early, and persist assiduously, in working
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ing out our salvation, and preparing for another state: and lest the sense of this uncertainty should wear off our minds, he from time to time gives us examples of it, and having none more striking to set before us, he has now given us an example in the hasty removal of a mighty king.

WHEN a private man is hurried out of the world, and sent at once to the supreme tribunal, the manner of his departure is little heeded, the knowledge of his fate extends but to a few, and the example is soon forgotten; but the station of kings is eminent, and men are inquisitive about every circumstance of their lives and deaths; by these means the accident is more striking, the example is more regarded, the report runs through half the world, and history transmits the warning to latest posterity; in this manner God has been pleased in our days to convey instruction, and by a striking example, to put us in mind of the uncertainty of life; it remains then that we make the proper improvement. But alas! we generally disappoint the gracious designs of providence in this way, partly by secretly supposing, without reason, that we shall be dealt with more favourably, and partly by a shameful want of attention to the message, that such dispensations of providence deliver to the sons of men;

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we hear them with wonder, we tell them as news, we perhaps think of them at first with a short emotion of mind, but we seldom seriously listen to the kindly advice they give, *be ye always ready for ye know not in what hour the son of man cometh.*

BUT as this example speaks louder than the hasty removal of private men, so it may serve to convince us that nothing can secure us from sudden death ; the only way to prevent a surprize from the insidious and irresistible enemy, is never to do any thing, in the doing of which we should be afraid to die ; frequently to ask our conscience how would it fare with me, if I were immediately to remove with the designs I am forming ; with the desires I am encouraging ; with the present temper of my heart and tenor of my conduct ; and before we engage in any thing of consequence, to examine the nature of the affair itself, the means we propose to use, and the end that we have in view ; and that as seriously as if it were, what indeed it may chance to prove, the last transaction of life, and the very business that shall usher in eternity.

WE may learn too from this event, how dangerous it is to postpone restitution and repentance to a death bed. I hope that our late sovereign
might

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might have said with Samuel, *whose ox have I taken, or whose ass have I taken, whom have I defrauded, or whom have I oppressed?* but had things been otherwise, what could he have done, when death approached, to appease the wrath of God, and atone for his guilt? could he have made restitution to those he had wronged? could he have done justice to those he had oppressed, or pleaded for his pardon with many prayers and tears? alas! hardly had he time to say so much as, *Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.* Such perhaps may be our own fate, and what we leave to the latter hours of life, may be left undone forever; in truth there are so many chances against a man, that postpones restitution and repentance to a death bed, that without any want of charity we may conclude, that it is only a shift to lull his conscience asleep, and to make his mind a little easier for the present; and, without the spirit of prophecy, we may foretell, that he will persevere to the end in his iniquity, and die in his sins; or at best only huddle up the concerns of his soul in haste, with a very imperfect repentance and a very superficial restitution.

FINALLY, we may learn from this event to fear God, and place our chief and greatest trust and confidence in the king immortal; never to have
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such dependance upon the *arm of flesh*, as to forget him *who doth according to his will among t^he armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth*; never to have so much dread of the wrath of man, as for fear of their displeasure and resentment to disobey the laws of that God, by whom kings reign; for this event preaches to us with a peculiar emphasis upon the texts, *put not your trust in princes nor in any child of man, for there is no help in them; and fear not man whose breath is in his nostrils, for wherein is he to be accounted of?* let your fear and trust be directed to that king who never dies, whose power is irresistible, wisdom unsearchable, and goodness unlimited; whose authority extends beyond the grave, and *who can destroy both body and soul in hell*; I say fear him.

To conclude, these I have mentioned are a few of the lessons that the death of our late sovereign reads in Reason's ear, which if we attentively hear, and diligently improve, we shall reap more valuable advantages by his death, than ever we enjoyed by his life, tho' it was under God, the mean of bestowing upon us, and continuing with us for a long time, many great and desirable blessings. May God of his great mercy send these lessons home to our hearts with efficacy, and grant to him
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who has succeeded to the throne, the spirit of wisdom, justice, and piety; may he sanctify his heart, direct his councils for the welfare of his people, and prosper his arms in defence of their just rights; may religion and liberty flourish in his days; may his dominions be blessed with plenty and peace during his administration; may he be the happy instrument of quieting the troubles of Europe, and procuring to his subjects an honourable and lasting peace; may his reign be as glorious to himself, as happy and prosperous to his people as that of his royal grandfather; may his death be as universally and justly regretted, and when he has finished his course upon earth, and been long a blessing to the world, may he be received by his judge, with *well done good and faithful servant*, and rewarded *with an eternal weight of glory*: grant these things, O most gracious God! for Christ's sake
Amen.



The favourable Dispensations of Providence with respect to the Accession of his present Majesty.

A

S E R M O N

Preached on the 25th. October, 1761.

II. CHRON. II. 12.

Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who hath made heaven and earth, who hath given unto David the King a wise son endued with prudence and understanding.

THE time in which the supreme direction of a state devolves to a new sovereign, is always interesting and critical ; enemies are attentive, allies are in suspense ; subjects are hesitating between hope and fear ; and all men are in eager expectation to see what effects the change will produce ; and when a people have been blessed with a good sovereign, when they are happy in the enjoyment of their

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their religious and civil rights ; when their arms are successful, and their trade flourishing ; in fine, when there is no decay, no leading into captivity, and no complaining in their streets, the change is particularly interesting ; because a people in that condition have very valuable blessings to lose, and very little more that they can desire ; because in such a change there is always some hazard, and certainty is more or less exchanged for hope.

AND therefore, when the change is attended with no bad consequences, when the helm of state quietly shifts from one steady and skilful hand to another ; when the new sovereign espouses those maxims, discovers that temper, and possesses those talents, that promise to continue, establish, and improve, the liberty, peace, and happiness of his people, they have the greatest reason to bless and adore the supreme disposer of all events, who has preserved their peace, and provided for their welfare in such a critical period ; and to love and reverence that prince, who affords them the prospect of the continuance of their happiness.

SUCH were the just sentiments of Hiram in the case before us, he had seen the Jews deprived of a sovereign, under whose administration they had

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risen to an height of wealth, influence, and glory, unknown to former ages; a sovereign, with whom he had lived in the strictest friendship, with whose kingdom he had many connections, and was interested in every change that happened there; for his peace as a neighbour, for his security as an ally, and for the commerce of his subjects. In this situation it was natural for him, when such a change happened, to be attentive to the conduct, and anxious to know the abilities, inclinations, and views of the succeeding sovereign, and to be in suspense till some discovery could be made of what he had to hope or fear from the change.

BUT when a solemn embassy arrived to renew the former alliance, when he found the new sovereign manifesting an attention to the interest and happiness of his people, breathing pacifick and moderate sentiments with respect to his neighbours, and, above all, imprest with the fear of God, and a zeal for his worship and honour, he considered these things as proofs of his prudence and understanding, and as happy presages of his future reign; and he did what every people should do in such circumstances, I mean, he gratefully acknowledged the hand of providence, and reverently adored the
goodness

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goodness of God. His example I thought deserved our imitation, and his words I believed might very nearly express the sentiments of our hearts upon this day, that last year deprived us of a sovereign, under whose auspicious government we enjoyed many valuable blessings, and lived peaceably and happily for a great number of years; a day now marked with the happy accession of our present gracious sovereign to the throne, and the beginning of a reign which we have been praying God may be long glorious and happy.

THAT suspense and hazard which necessarily attend all such changes, are now I hope in God happily over, the crown has settled on our sovereign's head in tranquillity, his subjects have professed their allegiance with unanimity, sincerity and affection; and if we can trust the testimony of a free people, who seldom flatter their princes, if we can judge from the early dispositions of his youth, if we can build any hopes upon a religious and virtuous education, if we can reason of the manner in which he designs to govern, from his free, gracious, and repeated declarations, if we may conjecture of his future conduct by the specimen he has hitherto exhibited, we must conclude that we have reason to espouse the sentiments of Hiram, and say,
Blessed

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Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who hath made heaven and earth, who hath given to our late sovereign a wise successor, endued with prudence and understanding.

INDEED, God only knows what is in the womb of time, and as an heathen poet justly observes, that no man ought to be called happy before death has removed him out of the way of misfortunes, so it is not in the beginning, but at the end of a reign, that a people can say with assurance, they have been blessed with a prince of prudence and understanding; in the mean time however, it is our duty and wisdom to hope for the best, and while we believe and feel that God has given us a prudent, and virtuous sovereign, to be grateful and thankful for the blessing, to pray for its continuance, and to endeavour to deserve it.

THEREFORE, in further discoursing upon these words, I shall first endeavour to confirm your gratitude to the supreme being, by pointing out some instances of his goodness in this dispensation, 2dly. I shall mention some of the duties incumbent upon us, in order to render the goodness of God effectual for our peace and happiness; and then conclude with my earnest prayers to God, that our greatest hopes of our new sovereign may be surpassed by his happy administration, and his highest expectations

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expectations of his subjects, exceeded by our faithfulness, love, and obedience.

WITH respect to the first, we may justly consider it as an instance of the kindness of providence, that in this critical conjuncture, there was no controverted right of succession; nor any disputed, doubtful titles to the throne, to occasion civil commotions. Of all the plagues that befall a nation, this is one of the worst, famine is severe, pestilence is dreadful, but in these, tho' men die, they die in peace; the father expires without the guilt of the son, and the son, if he survives, enjoys the inheritance of his father; cities may be thinned, but they are neither plundered nor burnt; temples may be unfrequented for a while, but still they remain for happier times; families may be in sorrow, but then they weep in peace; no ruffian hardened in murder and robbery, with fury in his eyes, oaths in his mouth, and the sword in his hand, breaks in upon them in the silent midnight hour.

BUT when a controverted succession has kindled up the rage of civil war, there is thenceforth no security of property, nor any protection from the laws; life and fortune become precarious, and all that is dear to men is at the discretion of profligate soldiers,

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✧ soldiers, upon such occasions doubly licentious; the cities are exhausted by heavy contributions, or sacked, because they cannot answer the exorbitant demands; the countries are eaten up by the party they favour, and ravaged by the one they oppose; fathers and sons, brethren and friends, sheath their swords in one anothers bowels in the field, and their wives and daughters are exposed to the rudeness and lust of ruffians at home. In a word, while the contest continues between the parties, there is nothing but violence, bloodshed, and desolation, and when the sword (after seas of blood have been shed) has decided the quarrel, the scene is closed with banishments, forfeitures, and barbarous executions, that entail distress upon children then unborn.

SUCH contentions are dangerous to any form of government, but doubly so to a constitution like ours, as delicate as it is excellent; too tender not to be hurt in such struggles, and too complicate in its frame, to support for any length of time the rough jostlings of civil wars: a disputed succession, and corruption, seem to be the plagues that it has most to dread; the last may wear it away in a slow consumption; but the first, if ever it should happen, and the parties be powerful and keen, may prove a mortal

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mortal fever, and bring it to a speedy and final dissolution ; a controverted succession must at all times be dangerous, but at present it might have been fatal, because our enemies would have inflamed the contention by their emissaries, supported the factions, by their arms or their money, and prolonged the dispute by artfully ballancing the parties ; how ready they are upon all occasions to act such a part ; and with what dexterity they can manage it, we have more than once found to our cost. And controled as they are in their ambitious schemes, fretted with losses, and perplexed with disappointments, they would have eagerly embraced the opportunity, and exerted their whole strength and policy, to have maintained and increased the confusion.

WHILE we had been destroying one another, they would have been repairing their losses, ruining our trade, and distressing our colonies ; in fine, if you would know the value of this blessing, peruse that part of our history that narrates the contention between the houses of York and Lancaster ; or to come nearer home, reflect upon the fatal consequences of the controverted claims of Bruce and Baliol, and you will gratefully adore the kindness of that providence

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which ordered things otherwise in your days, and preserved us from such a dreadful calamity.

BUT, supposing there had been no disputed succession to occasion a civil war, as thank God there was not, yet had he permitted us to fall under a tedious minority, the consequences might have been fatal ; Solomon's maxim, *wo unto thee O land when thy king is a child*, has been commonly found just from fatal experience, and all the provisions that the wit and foresight of man have hitherto contrived, have generally proved ineffectual to prevent oppression, mismanagement, and disorder in such circumstances ; for envy, ambition, and avarice, have then more room to exert their force ; every one contrives how to serve his own interest, and to ravage something from the fatherless state ; and as they necessarily cross one another in their designs, and jostle in their projects, thence arise animosities, wrangling, factions, and all those evils that embroil a nation and weaken a state. The great struggle for power, honour, and wealth ; and the poor become a prey to avarice, insolence and oppression ; and while some are studying to supplant their neighbours, and others striving to keep their stations ; one villain winks at the oppressions of another, the people are fleeced, the publick business is neglected,

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ted, and the same confusion and disorder prevail in a kingdom, that soon appear in a family when the master is absent, or incapable to give directions.

IN fine, it is a misfortune that cannot always be avoided, but is always to be deprecated ; because at all times it is dangerous, and in our situation it must have been doubly so, engaged as we are in a necessary, important, and burdensome war, involved in expensive alliances, publick credit, naturally a tender thing, much stretched, and all Europe in expectation of the event of a struggle, that must determine whether we or our rivals in trade, and influence, shall gain a superiority. If you read the transactions of almost any minority, that our own, or foreign history records, and consider the present critical situation of Europe, you will be convinced that you have reason to bless and adore the divine providence, who has delivered you from such a misfortune upon this occasion.

BUT, supposing the supreme authority had devolved, as it did by the kind providence of heaven, to one arrived to maturity, if his subjects had had no confidence in his understanding ; no opinion of the integrity of his heart ; nor any favourable prospect of his future reign : if they had been suspicious

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of the maxims he imbibed in his youth ; if they had seen him attached to rapacious favourites ; if they had found him giving that time and attention to pleasures, that he owes to the interests of his country, and the happiness of his people ; if they had suspected him of arbitrary designs ; and taken the alarm for their religion or liberty, had all or any of these been the case, what must the consequences have been in such a critical conjuncture ?

DISCONTENT and opposition would have distracted our councils, suspicion and diffidence would have sunk the publick credit, our enemies would have grown insolent and prosperous, our friends diffident and lukewarm, our people divided and desponding, and in spite of the success with which it has pleased God to bless our arms, we should have been deprived of the fruits of all the blood we have shed, and all the treasure we have spent, and at last closed an expensive war by a barren, precarious, and dishonourable peace. But as thank God there has not been so much as a distant hint, nor the smallest suggestion of any of these things in him who succeeded to the supreme authority, no bad effects have followed from the change ; our enemies have reaped no advantage, and we have perceived no alteration of our affairs to the worse
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and we may hope through the assistance of God, to put an end to bloodshed and violence, by an honourable and lasting peace, and to sit down each man under his vine, happy in the enjoyment of precious liberty, secure in his person and property, and serving God in quiet, according to his best judgement, under the protection of a wise, equitable, and religious sovereign.

IN truth, we not only needed in our present circumstances, a prince that would protect us from our enemies abroad, and preserve us in peace and tranquillity at home, by his power and policy; but also one who would influence our opinions, and reform our manners by his example, for tho' I hope in God we are not yet so bad, as some have represented us, yet I suspect the complaint is too just, that religion, that bond of society, that guide of life, and guardian of virtue, has not in general that hold of our hearts, that influence upon the deliberations of our minds, and the conduct of our lives, that its importance, truth, and excellence deserve; and therefore we needed a prince to inspire us with seriousness and attention by his example, and to disgrace by his own conduct, that libertinism in principle and practice, that was growing too much in fashion.

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AT least, one of an opposite character, one who would have fostered infidelity in religious principles, or licentiousness in moral practice by his example, must have proved in our present situation, a dreadful misfortune: from the polished courtier to the illiterate peasant, all men mimic their superiours, and imitate the virtues and vices of the great, and when infidelity and vice pour down upon a nation from the higher ranks of life, the powerful stream sweeps all before it, the bitter waters spread, and the giddy people suck in the poison with greediness; there is hardly any thing so unreasonable and impious that fashion will not introduce, support, and seem to justify, and as the king is the model of the court, and the court an example to the nation, it seldom fails that a good or bad king gives a deep tincture to the manners of his people.

THIS is very evident to any one who reads either profane or sacred history with attention; under the religious David the Jews worshipped the true God; under the impious Jeroboam they adored the calves in Bethel; under the good Josiah, the courts of the Lord were crowded with devout worshipers; under the profligate Manasseh, idolatry and vice spread like an infection: the truth is, numbers follow the prevailing fashion without thought, and swallow
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down what they imbibe from their superiors against interest, conviction, and common sense; many have their thoughts so much dissipated, and their heads so giddy, that they are incapable of thinking or judging of what is right, but are carried along with the current of the times, perfectly indifferent whether it bears them to what is good, or what is bad; and there are many others, whose consciences and conduct are directed by their interest or ambition, to whom vice or virtue, religion or impiety come alike, if they can promote their designs and recommend them to the favour of those who have it in their power to gratify their wishes; and therefore a prince who sets before his people a good example, is a very valuable blessing; for his example will bring religion and virtue into fashion, it will encourage the good, fix the wavering, disgrace the profligate, and overawe the licentious; and tho' it cannot be expected, to bring all to real seriousness, and sincere goodness, yet it will do much to keep all within the bounds of decency and order, and to banish that unnatural pride, and shameless confidence, with which hardened profligates would otherwise boast of their wickedness, and glory in their shame.

Now, since God by his gracious providence has preserved us from all the inconveniencies, hazards,
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and ills to which a change of sovereigns is naturally exposed, and given us the prospect of the continuance of our prosperity, and the increase of our happiness, it remains that we have a grateful sense of his goodness, and that we endeavour to co-operate with the dispensations of providence, and gracious dispositions of our sovereign to promote our felicity.

THE first duty then that is incumbent upon us, and indeed the most important of them all, is religiously to observe the direction given by Samuel to the Jews in a like case, *if ye will fear the Lord and serve him, and obey his voice, and not rebel against the commandment of the Lord, then shall both ye and also the king that reigneth over you, continue following the Lord your God. Only fear the Lord and serve him with all your heart, for consider how great things he has done for you, but if ye still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed both ye and your king.* This advice will be applicable to every nation to the end of the world, for righteousness exalteth a nation but sin is the ruin of any people. The wisest prince will not prevent the ruin of a wicked people, his vigilance, prayers, and virtues, may for a while suspend vengeance and ward off their ruin, but it will come at length, and come with more weight; all that Hezekiah

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zekiah could obtain for the profligate Jews, was only *that there should be peace and truth in his time*; all that Josiah could do to divert the impending ruin by his unwearied endeavours to reclaim his people, and his earnest prayers for their prosperity, was only *that he himself should be gathered to his fathers before the evil came upon them*; nay, all that even Moses, that distinguished favourite of heaven, could obtain for a rebellious people, was only *that wrath should not consume them as in a moment*, but still they were doomed to fall in the wilderness.

A GOOD and prudent sovereign, with the assistance of God, may for us resist the power, counter-mine the policy, and defeat the bad designs of mortal kings like himself, but if we provoke the immortal king of heaven, we must either make peace for ourselves by sincere repentance, or perish in our obstinacy; indeed the greatest injury you can do to yourselves, the worst treachery you can be guilty of to your country, the greatest disloyalty you can show to your sovereign, is to lead profligate and vicious lives; because by these you contribute all that you can, to bring upon yourselves and them, an enemy, whose power none can resist, who can insatiate the wisest heads, intimidate the bravest hearts, render the best laid schemes abortive, and distress a nation

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at once with famine, slavery, pestilence, and the sword: therefore, if you would wish prosperity to your country, an happy reign to your sovereign, peaceful days to yourselves while you are here, and eternal happiness when you go hence, *strive to keep consciences void of offence, both toward God, and toward man; eschew evil and do good, seek peace and ensue it.*

NEXT to this, avoid levity and fickleness, that, I suspect, are the foibles of our tempers, and the reigning vices in these kingdoms; let not every misfortune, nor every mismanagement whether real or imaginary, cool your affection, or shake your loyalty to your sovereign; kings are but men, and it is natural for men to err; the best of them cannot do all the good they would wish to do, nor the wisest of them always avoid being misled; they cannot see every thing with their own eyes, nor execute every thing with their own hands; they are generally surrounded with selfish and designing men, who industriously keep truth from their ears, yet they must act upon the information of others, and trust the execution of their designs to men, who often want capacity, and sometimes inclination, to discharge the trust reposed in them with fidelity and diligence; so that they are often more to be pitied
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than blamed when they do amiss, and when fortune crosses their enterprizes, they are often censured for what deserved applause; and the truth is, the subject errs as often in his judgement, as the sovereign does in his management.

How seldom is it, even in our own narrow families, that we can get every thing just as we would have it, how rarely do our little regulations there, give universal content, and how often are we forced to put up with things that we do not entirely approve of, because we cannot alter them, without plunging ourselves into greater ills than those we would avoid? if this be the case in our narrow spheres, what allowances should we make for men who manage such a difficult province, are surrounded with so many temptations, overwhelmed with such a multitude of cares, and bewildered, as it were, in the intricacy of so much business?

NEITHER should we be cooled in our affection to our sovereign, by those forbidding pictures that disappointed ambition, fretting discontent, or assuming petulancy may from time to time draw of the state of things; there are men of such dissatisfied tempers, that place them in heaven they would find something to blame, there are others

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of such restless dispositions, that they are always dissatisfied with the present state of things, be it what it will, and there are many who have so much self sufficiency, that to them every thing seems wrong, but what they do themselves, and of consequence they will be eternally reforming the church or the state.

THERE is indeed no administration perfect, but that which is directed by omniscient wisdom, and executed by almighty power; where men are employed, there will be always many things to blame, it is much easier to discover errors, than to avoid them, and to draw plausible schemes of government than to carry them into practice; and as rulers are unable to gratify the expectations of all, disappointment breeds discontent, discontent vents itself in partial representations of things; and envy, ambition, and avarice, often disguise themselves under the mask of zeal for the good of the publick, and the reformation of real or imaginary grievances.

IT was thus that Absalom prepared the minds of the Jews for his impious rebellion, for *when any man that had a controversy, came to the king for judgement, see (said he) thy matters are good*
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and right, but there is no man deputed of the king to hear thee: O that I were made a judge in the land, that any man who hath any suit or cause might come unto me, and I would do him justice; faction in the state, and schism in the church, have always used much the same language, and always met with fools disposed to believe them; I mean, they have found many faults, promised many improvements, and always made things worse than they found them. To conclude, study to be quiet, and to do your own business; fear God, honour the king, meddle not with those that are given to change.

MAY the almighty God, by whom kings reign, and princes decree judgement, inspire the heart of our sovereign with wisdom, piety and justice, may he direct his councils, prosper his arms, bless his realms with plenty, and make him the happy instrument of procuring to his people, and the rest of Europe, an happy and lasting peace: may his reign be long, happy to himself, and prosperous to his kingdoms, and when it comes to an end, may his death be regretted by his people, and his soul received by his God, with *well done, good and faithful servant*, grant this almighty God, for Jesus Christ's sake. *Amen.*

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The Duty of Servants explained and enforced.

A

S E R M O N

Preached upon the return of plenty, after several years of dearth.

COLOS. III. 22

Servants obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eye service, as men pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing God.

AS the Christian religion is designed for the improvement and happiness of mankind in general, so it extends its precepts to all ranks and conditions of life; and without respect of persons, teaches all men every where, to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly and righteously in this present world. There is no condition so high

as to be exempted from obedience to its laws, nor any station so low, that it is forgotten in the plan of its instructions, or left undirected how to act, that the approbation of God may be happily obtained; the peace and happiness of society uniformly promoted: and insomuch, that did men as generally obey the precepts of religion, as they profess to believe its articles; the world would be, by much, a more comfortable habitation, the few days designed for us here, might be passed with infinitely more peace and satisfaction, and when we came to bid farewell to this world, we might look back upon life with more tranquility, and self approbation, and forward to eternity with fewer misgiving thoughts.

IF the moral precepts of religion, had that influence upon the deliberations of our hearts, and the conduct of our lives, that the authority of the lawgiver, the design upon which they were published, and the rewards and penalties with which they are enforced, ought to have upon reasonable and accountable creatures, all injustice and oppression, all envy and malice, all covetousness and slander, all pride and debauchery, would be banished out of the world; and every man, without intermeddling with his neighbour's concerns, would study
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to be quiet, to do his own business, and *to have a conscience void of offence, toward God, and toward man.*

THEN indeed, man would be but a little lower than the angels in happiness, as well as rank; at least he would have nothing else to distress him, but the natural, and unavoidable evils of his imperfect state, which tho' they be many, yet do not make up one half of that misery and trouble that mortals struggle with here below: for by far the greatest part of that perplexity, and vexation in which we spend our days, arises either from neglecting the duties of our respective spheres of life, or acting contrary to them, or performing them by halves in a lukewarm and heartless manner: and tho' an universal and thorough change in this respect, is hardly to be hoped for, *untill the times of restitution of all things*, spoken of by the holy prophets shall take place, yet it is the interest and duty of every individual, to endeavour to fulfill all righteousness, and by faithfully discharging the duties of his sphere, to be as useful to others, as innocent and virtuous himself, and as strictly obedient to the laws of his God, as he possibly can in this imperfect state

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THE words now read before you, as my text, lead me to discourse upon the duties of a station, that has no small influence on the peace and happiness of private families, and the interest and tranquility of society in general; a station that is very considerable for the great number of those who fill it, and that very much needs direction, because of the variety of its duties, the multitude of its temptations, the greatness of its trust, and a certain licentiousness that has indeed infected all ranks, but must be peculiarly pernicious in that of servants. I thought an advice of this kind particularly necessary and pertinent at present, when it has pleased God of his great goodness, to turn the dearth and scarcity we laboured under, into cheapness and plenty; the happy consequences of which, will be a greater choice of masters, better entertainment, and higher wages; and as it is too commonly the misfortune of men, from the highest to the lowest, to make the goodness of God, an occasion and encouragement to sin and folly; I was afraid that these things might now produce, as they have sometimes done before, idleness, wantonness, and insolence, things as pernicious to the servant, as they are to the master, and as contrary to the laws of God, as to the interest of society. And as all souls are mine, is the declaration of God in scripture, so

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the attention and endeavours of the ministers of the gospel, should extend to every station of life, that every member of the church, in his vocation and ministry, may truly serve God and keep his commandments. I shall therefore in this discourse, lay before you, some of the principal duties incumbent upon servants, and then conclude with my earnest prayers, that God may so dispose their hearts, to fulfil them, that they may receive his approving sentence at the end of this transitory life. Indeed I do not pretend to offer any thing strictly new upon this subject, but tho' it be not new to the world, it may perhaps be so to some of those that hear me, or I may revive the remembrance of things that were once known, and are now forgotten, or possibly (with the blessing of God) I may influence the practice where the duties are both known and remembered, but carelessly and superficially discharged.

FIRST then, it is required of servants, that they be strictly honest, *thou shalt not steal*, is directed to all stations of life, and *thou shalt not covet any thing that is thy neighbour's*, extends to every part of the property of other men, and consequently dishonesty in any condition of life is base, shameful, and wicked, but it must be doubly so, when it is committed against those who put confidence in

in our honesty, when it is attended with a breach of trust, and aggravated with the basest and blackest ingratitude; and thus it must always be in all dishonest servants, there, the crime of theft is carried to its highest pitch of wickedness, for they rob the person who puts his goods into their hands, with a design to preserve them, they injure the man, whose interest they are bound to promote, they eat his bread and receive his wages, and secretly contrive his ruin.

A MAN has a thousand ways to secure his property from strangers, but if those of his own house prove dishonest, he must be undone, because it is next to impossible to prevent their villainy; the midnight thief that breaks into an house is not half so guilty; the robber that meets me on the high way, takes only what I may have about me, he lies under no particular obligations, he betrays no trust, I know how much I lose, and may find means to repair it by more diligence, or greater frugality; but the dishonest servant betrays me, where I thought myself secure, screens his iniquity, under the profession of an attachment to my interest, insensibly brings on my ruin, while I am not so much as dreaming of it, and in the end I am undone without mismanagement, and without

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any visible misfortune, unable to satisfy myself, or to account to others by what means it came to pass.

AND thus with the loss of my substance, it is a chance if he does not ruin my reputation too, for, without any visible accident, without any known loss, without any reasonable cause that I can alledge, I may be rendered incapable of satisfying the just demands of those who trusted me in business, or supported me out of friendship; and the conjecture that they will naturally make, will be, that I have been either prodigal and extravagant, or am acting the villain, and purposely defrauding them: thus the dishonest servant brings me to misery, and at the same time deprives me of compassion and relief, a kind of guilt so complicated and black, that it cannot escape the vengeance of the just judge of all the earth. For hardly can the universe present a scene to the All-seeing eye, that more deserves his pity, or calls louder for his vengeance, than a man labouring hard, living frugally, and using all honest endeavours to earn a subsistence for himself and family; while the secret theft, and unobserved pilfering of those he trusts, like moths consume his substance, disappoint him of the fruits of his labour, and destroy the effects

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of his industry; he who sees all iniquity with a perfect hatred, must behold this kind with a peculiar abhorrence, and reserve for it some chosen curse, some singular vengeance suitable to the black, and complicated guilt.

THOSE who are dishonest in this way, generally satisfy themselves with the thought, that they pilfer but trifles, that their masters can spare them, or that they should of themselves be more liberal, but the pilfering of those trifles, prove that they have not the true principles of honesty and justice; trifles will amount in time to something of consequence; impunity will encourage them to go still greater lengths; and practice will harden them in iniquity, insomuch that it is ten chances to one if they stop short, till they bring themselves to disgrace, or their master to ruin. A servant is no proper judge, whether his master can spare such things or not, if he could spare them ever so easily, his affluent circumstances will not justify the servant's dishonesty, and if this principle be once admitted, the servant will always suppose, that the master may spare, whatever his heart chances to covet, and his imagination suggests ways and means to conceal, untill his villainy be detected, or his master undone. Nor is the want of liberality in the master,

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ter, any better excuse for the servant's dishonesty, for if he pays the promised wages, he fulfils his part of the contract, and may say with the master of the vineyard in the gospel, friend, *I do thee no wrong*; if he bestows any thing more, the servant should receive it as a gift, with gratitude and thankfulness; and if otherwise, be content with his wages.

BUT besides downright dishonesty, a servant may be unjust, and wrong his master by carelessness and profusion; he may indeed be honest according to the common acception of the word, but for want of care, permit others to steal away his master's property, destroy it himself for want of attention, or waste it for want of frugality: though here he does not perhaps betray so much depravity of heart, yet he as effectually fails in his duty, the consequences may be as fatal to his master, and the vices will as certainly grow habitual in himself; carefulness and frugality are as much the supposed, or express terms of the contract, as honesty, the want of the former is as really a breach of trust, as the want of the latter, and it is of very little consequence to the master, whether he loses his property by the carelessness, or covetousness of his servant; whether he is undone by his folly, or his

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his fraud; and the thievish servant is at least *wiser in his generation*, than the careless and profuse, for if he violates his faith, ruins his master, hazards his soul, and disobeys his God; he reaps, or proposes to reap, some present profit, but the other incurs the guilt, without the temptation, and provides for himself a miserable eternity, without promoting his interest upon earth.

YET, tho' carelessness and profusion, be as contrary to the duty of the servant, and attended with as ill consequences to the master, as dishonesty, they are seldom haunted with such a sense of guilt; *how could I help it*, is a ready excuse, and let the instance be ever so flagrant, they wipe their mouths, and say we have done no wickedness. But would they seriously consider the nature of the obligations they come under, to promote by all lawful means the interest of their master, or would they attend to the effects of their carelessness, upon the interest and happiness of him and his family, they could hardly fail to perceive, that it is a mixture of dishonesty and injustice, and a vice that will soon grow habitual in themselves, make them little reputed while they continue servants, and bring them to poverty and want, when they come to act for themselves: the crime itself seldom fails
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to be aggravated with dissimulation, and lying, excuses must be invented, reasons and causes must be assigned; what was owing to carelessness, will be ascribed to other causes, and what profusion has wasted, false accounts will be contrived to conceal; in a word, unfaithfulness in servants, whether it proceeds from dishonesty or carelessness, is a complication of the blackest crimes, and like the tongue among the members, a world of iniquity; and therefore if you would have the esteem of men, and the approbation of your own consciences, while you live, or the hopes of a blessed eternity, when you come to die; enter upon your service with the Psalmist's sentiments, *I hate the sins of unfaithfulness, there shall no such cleave unto me,* and uniformly adhere to the generous resolution, *my integrity I hold fast and will not let it go, my heart shall never reproach me as long as I live.*

NEXT to these, diligence and application are duties incumbent upon servants, *he that is slothful in his work* (says Solomon) *is brother to him that is a great waster,* you sell your time and labour to your masters, at a certain price, and consequently to misemploy your time, is deliberate fraud, and to neglect the work assigned you, downright injustice: as the prophet Jeremiah denounceth *wo to*
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The Duty of Servants explained. 97

the man who useth his neighbour's service without wages, we may add, wo to him who receiveth his neighbour's wages without doing his work, because the injustice is equally flagrant. Most of the servants in the Apostle's days, were such as had been taken in war, such as had been reduced into slavery by misfortunes, or such as by an hard fate indeed, became slaves, by being born of parents, that, as the Apostle expresses it, were under the yoke; negligence, one would think, might have been in some degree excusable in persons, who without their own consent, had lost their freedom, had little prospect of ever recovering it, could not change their masters when they were ill used, and had no reward for their labour, but a scanty subsistence.

YET the Apostle insists upon the necessity of doing their duty with singleness of heart, and diligently performing their business for conscience sake. How much more must it be incumbent upon servants in our days, to do their duty with diligence, who freely, and out of choice enter into a kind of covenant, to work for certain wages, have it in their power once or twice in a year to alter their circumstances, if they think them grievous, and can demand the price of their labour,

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98 *The Duty of Servants explained.*

when their time is out? look upon it in what light you please, sloth and idleness in this respect, are just as criminal, fraudulent, and unjust, as it would be in a person, to sell a commodity at a certain price, and upon the delivery pilfer a great part of it, or spoil the whole. What else is your service, but an exchange of one commodity for another, you give your time and labour for a certain sum of money, and consequently, whatever you abstract of your time and labour from your master's work, without his knowledge and consent, you pilfer from the commodity you have sold, diminish from its value, and so far act the cheat.

ALLOW me to say, that there are many, and probably some just complaints, of want of principle in this respect: numbers seem not so much to think of the nature of the contract, of the solemnity of the obligation, and of the final account that they must make of the way and manner in which they do their duty; as of wearing out the time, forming a specious title to the wages, and imposing upon their masters with eye service: conscience seems to be laid aside, God is not in all their thoughts, and they look no further than the sight or resentment of their masters upon earth. But tho' you may escape your master's eye, there

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is an all-seeing eye that witnesseth the fraud, and a just judging God, who will call you to an account; *for he that doth wrong, shall receive for the wrong he hath done, whether he be bond or free, and there is no respect of persons*: indeed one would think that the consciences of those who idle away their masters time, would reproach them, when they sit down to eat the bread for which they have not laboured, and come to receive the wages they have not earned; the gains of injustice seldom prosper long; and he who receives wages for which he hath not wrought, shall as the Prophet expresseth it, *put it into a bag that hath holes*; he cannot use it with the approbation of his own heart, he cannot hope that it will prosper, and he must expect that it shall rise up against him in judgement.

AND besides the injustice of it, with respect to your masters, besides the fatal consequences with which it will be attended in a future existence, it will prove very prejudicial to your present interest; you will be little esteemed in the families in which your lot chances to fall, your residence in them will not be long, you will leave them with a bad grace; and when your character comes to be known, you will have no chance to have the best masters, the highest wages, the most constant employment,

the kindest treatment, or the most honourable work; all these ye must resign to those who deserve them better, to those who are diligent in business, and conscientiously do their duty. You will contract an habit of negligence and idleness, and a certain aversion to labour and industry, that may very probably make you take some foolish or desperate course, or at least will keep you poor and low during all your lives. For as Solomon observes, *slothfulness casteth into a deep sleep, and the idle soul shall suffer hunger. Therefore whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men, knowing that of the Lord, ye shall receive the reward of an eternal inheritance, if ye faithfully discharge the duties of your sphere.*

BESIDES these, servants ought to be tractable and patient: obstinacy and pride, are always contemptible, and commonly ruinous in whatever rank of life a man chances to stand; but they are doubly so in a dependent condition, and peculiarly ridiculous in those, whom the providence of heaven has placed in a low station. A servant can hardly act in a manner more inconsistent with his duty, interest, and condition, than when he presumes to direct his master; ventures to do things his own way, in opposition to his master's will; and

and is peevish and refractory when his council is not followed. It is no doubt friendly and his duty, to offer his best advice, but to fret because it is not followed, is foolish, and insolent, because his master must be supposed to know his own affairs best; because his interest is most at stake, and because it is his province to direct, and that of the servant to obey.

PRIDE in a servant seldom fails to render himself unhappy, and his master more harsh, for it makes him dissatisfied with his entertainment, discontented with his wages, impatient of reproof, and incapable of obedience; and as there is something in man, that naturally disposes him to mortify a proud and haughty temper, so his master will be apt to be provoked by his arrogance, and ready to embrace every opportunity of humbling his pride, and exercising his patience.

THEY whose fate it is to serve others, must resolve to make allowances for their humours, to put up with some things, that may seem very mortifying, and to bear reproofs with patience; if you have done wrong, it is reasonable that ye should be reprov'd, the loser may at least have leave to complain, and tho' anger in such cases is seldom useful,

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or wise in the master, yet it is very natural, and may sometimes carry a good natured, and prudent man, beyond the strict bounds of discretion, and make him use expressions, that may be mortifying and harsh; in such circumstances, you should remember, that a soft answer turneth away wrath, that the ingenious acknowledgement of a fault, and sincere professions of a resolution to amend it, seldom fail to appease anger: whereas an attempt to vindicate what is wrong, highly aggravates the offence; frivolous excuses offered in order to extenuate your fault, only betray an insensibility of it; and insolent answers, when you have done amiss, might provoke even one of a mild temper, and are apt to make a man who is already angry, lose all patience. *Exhort servants (says St. Paul in his epistle to Titus) to be obedient to their masters, and to please them well in all things, not answering again, not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.*

EVEN when you think yourselves unjustly blamed, your answers should be mild, and submissive; ye should chuse the happiest season for your vindication; and have a little patience, till the fit of passion be subsided. We are not always blameless,
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when we suppose ourselves to be so, because we are partial judges in our own cause: and when we have to do with people of passionate tempers, it is often, at once useless and dangerous to contradict them, for while the flush of passion continues, you may as well reason with the roaring sea, or persuade the storm to be calm, as attempt to make them listen to what you have to offer in your vindication, to think with calmness, or judge with equity; in such cases, silence is the greatest prudence, and a little patience, the nearest and surest way to peace.

IT is here that you can shew yourselves superior to your masters, for if you can command your tempers, speak with discretion, and act with prudence, when they suffer themselves to be hurried away, by an impetuous passion, into rashness and fury; you demonstrate that you have more of the reason and sedateness of men, and spirit and temper of Christians than they; and consequently that it is not their merit, but the mysterious providence of heaven that has raised them to a superior rank in life, for says Solomon, *greater is he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city.* Above all, remember the direction of St. Paul, *Servants be subject to your masters, with all fear, not only*

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only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward; for this is thank worthy, if a man, for conscience toward God, endure grief, suffering wrongfully; for what glory is it, if when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye should take it patiently; but if when ye do well and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.

BUT how rare is this kind of patience! instead of suffering wrongfully with meekness, ye will scarce bear to be reprov'd for your faults, hardly receive necessary directions, with calmness and pleasure, and seem very little sensible that submission is any part of your duty; indeed the natural order of things in this case, seems to be in a great measure reversed, for instead of being subject to your masters with all fear, they are rather subject to you, they can scarce content you with entertainment, satisfy you with wages, or fall upon ways and means to keep you in temper, and prevail with you to do your business in peace. They must overlook much negligence, bear much insolence, and see many faults without seeming to observe them; and when it is unavoidably necessary to reprove, they must soften every expression, qualify, even their just complaints, and may be thankful after all, if they be not heard with indifference, answered with insolence, and told with contempt, that if they

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The Duty of Servants explained. 105

are not satisfied with your service, they may supply themselves otherways: the happy freedom that our country enjoys, the plenty which God has bestowed, and the extensive trade, with which we are blest, that employs many hands, may encourage such a conduct, but they never will justify it in his sight, who commands servants to be subject to their masters with all fear. Nay they will aggravate the guilt, God may be provoked by such disobedience to withdraw the blessings, and the reproof of Moses to the Jews, *do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise?* or that, of the prophet Hoseah, *according to their pastures, so were they filled, they were filled, and their hearts were exalted, therefore they have forgotten me*, will be truly applicable. In a word, if you would act like Christians, you must be subject for conscience sake, your obedience must proceed from a religious principle, and you ought not so much to consider, whether or not your master may in himself deserve your submission, whether or not, your want of submission is like to affect your present interest, or whether or not, you may be arrogant with impunity, but chiefly, that God has commanded you to be obedient; that submission is your duty; and that it is your interest, abstracting from all other considerations to do service with good will *as unto the Lord, and not unto men;*

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knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free ; you cannot be disobedient to your masters commanding what is lawful, without being disobedient to God, and if you perversly neglect the duties of that sphere, which God hath assigned you for the present, whatever pretences you may have to other virtues, whatever airs of religion you may assume, like Jonah's gourd, all your goodness has a worm at the root, that will make it wither away, without bringing forth the fruits of eternal life.

LASTLY, servants ought to be no tale bearers, nor act as spies in their master's family, for this, like dishonesty, is a breach of trust, may be attended with very bad consequences, to the interest and happiness of the master, and seldom fails to bring vexation and disgrace upon the servant himself. Indeed in a well regulated family, he will not hear or see any thing, that the master needs to be ashamed or afraid of, tho' it be published to the world; yet in all families there are certain domestick concerns, that the world has no business with ; certain private transactions, that as they pertain only to that small society, so they should not be known any where else, and certain little regulations, and peculiarities

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peculiarities in its oeconomy, which tho' they may not only be innocent, but prudent, useful and necessary, yet ought not to be exposed to the malicious interpretations, and ill natured glosses of a censorious world.

A MAN's own house ought to be his sanctuary, to which he may retire, and be safe from the sharp eye of malice, and the poisonous sting of the tale-bearer's tongue; it is there that he opens his heart to his friends and relations, that he explains his designs to his children and servants, and throws off that restraint and caution with which he converses with the world, because he has reason to believe that all about him are friends: and consequently it is there that a talebearer is most dangerous, and criminal; most dangerous, because his being in the family, gives him an opportunity to hear and see most of his master's transactions and private conduct, and that connection gives a certain probability to his reports, and gains them belief in the world; and most criminal, because he betrays the trust reposed in him, does mischief under the masque of friendship, and injures the man to whom it is his duty and profession to be useful: servants as being members of a family are obliged by all the ties of gratitude, profession, and duty, to promote

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its interest and seek its peace, and nothing is more likely to be ruinous to both these, than to publish its private concerns, and whisper in the neighbourhood its real or supposed secrets. Indeed much more of its happiness depends upon the tongues of servants, than they themselves seem to be aware of, a distant hint may be improved to its disadvantage, when dropt by a servant, and how often do tale-bearing servants, set families at variance within themselves, and sow discord between them and their neighbours? *but blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the children of God, but cursed are they that foster contention, for they are the emissaries of the devil.*

THEREFORE, if you would act the part of conscientious servants, or good Christians, *seek the peace of the families in which you dwell, for in the peace thereof you shall have peace,* and to do this effectually you must espouse the Psalmist's resolution, *I said I will take heed to my ways, that I offend not with my tongue, I will keep my mouth as it were with a bridle,* let all that ye chance to hear or see of the private concerns of the families in which you dwell, continue private, sow not the seeds of discord in them, by accusing the one to the other, and beware of inflaming the quarrels that may arise with-
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in themselves, or with their neighbours by relating the hasty expressions, or uncautious actions of heedlessness and anger; kindly bury all such in oblivion, or if duty and the interest of the family require that you should make a report, sweeten the sentiments, soften the expressions, omit the provoking circumstances, and as it were, extract the substance, retaining as little as possible of the wormwood and the gall.

AND on the other hand, add an emphasis to any expressions of kindness that you may chance to hear from either side, set every office of civility that may pass between them, in the strongest light, and endeavour to make even casual and indifferent actions, wear some air of kindness; in a word, as far as is consistent with the sanctity of truth, and the duty you owe to your masters, use every method to strengthen friendship where it has taken place, to revive it where it has been interrupted, and to maintain peace, and mutual kindness among the several members of the family in which you dwell, and with all the neighbourhood around you.

AND as you must not publish the private concerns of the families in which you reside, neither should you pry into those of your neighbours, nor
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pump their servants in order to discover them, for by doing these things, you tempt your neighbours to iniquity, may involve yourselves in trouble, and certainly act in a way inconsistent with christian charity; inquisitiveness and talebearing are seldom separated, they mutually foster one another, for he that is apt to talk of other mens matters, will be also eager to know them, and it is not perhaps very easy to know much, and to conceal all. The surest method not to be tempted to betray secrets, and not to be suspected (tho' innocent) when they chance to be divulged, is to receive as few of them as possible.

THO' you may by talebearing curry favour for a while, yet you are almost sure in the end to meet with contempt, disgrace, and vexation, the animosities you raise will subside, the ill offices you have done will be discovered, your malicious intentions will be understood, and reconciliation will unite both parties in an insuperable aversion to your person and interest.

How often has talebearing turned servants out of lucrative places, deprived them of bread, and reduced them to want and misery? and sooner or latter every one who is guilty of it, shall feel the accomplishment

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accomplishment of Isaiah's prophecy, *behold all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks, walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled, this shall ye have of mine hand ye shall lie down in sorrow.*

To conclude, honesty in your conduct; carefulness with respect to such things as are committed to your charge; diligence in your work; patience in your temper; and prudence in the government of your tongues; are the principal duties of your station: and these duties you should seriously and sincerely endeavour to discharge, if you would wish to obtain the good opinion of the world; if you desire that the wages you receive should prosper in your hands; if you would have the approbation of your own hearts, and the comforts of a good conscience; if you would look back upon this existence with pleasure when you stand upon the brink of eternity, or hope to be received at the awful tribunal of the supreme judge of all the earth, with well done good and faithful servants. Which may God of his infinite mercy grant to all that hear me, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

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The Duties of Masters to their Servants explained and recommended.

COLOS. IV. 1.

Masters give unto your Servants, that which is just and equal, knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven.

M^R brethren, (says St. James) *have not the faith, of our Lord Jesus Christ the Lord of glory, with respect of persons; but if ye have respect of persons ye commit sin: and surely nothing can be more inconsistent with the office of a minister, with the spirit of that gospel which he preaches, and with that general connexion, that is between him and all members of a congregation, committed by providence to his care, than a partiality to the persons and stations of men: for as he serves that God, who without respect of persons, judgeth every man's work, so without regard of rank or station, he should teach every man his duty, without preferring one before another, doing nothing with partiality, and*

as

The Duty of Masters explained. 113

as there are whimsical, unjust, and tyrannical masters, as well as dishonest, negligent, and insolent servants, who seem to know as little how to command with the Christian temper, as the others to obey according to the laws of the gospel; I supposed I should have failed in my duty, given just cause of charging me with partiality, and (however they may take it) betrayed a want of attention to their present interest, and future happiness, if after having endeavoured to persuade their servants to obey with diligence, honesty, and patience; I had not also exhorted them to rule with moderation, justice and charity. For this reason I have chosen the words that I have read before you, *Masters give unto your servants that which is just and equal, knowing that ye also have a master in heaven.* Hoping that the supreme authority, from which this commandment proceeded, the powerful motive with which it is enforced, I mean that ye have a master in heaven, and the great and amiable example insinuated as a pattern for you, in the exercise of your authority, would at once direct the judgement, influence the will, humanize the heart, and dispose you to hear with patience, and practise with sincerity, and conscience, the duties that I am about to recommend; as far as they shall be found to be included in the general expressions of my text, con-

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sistent with the spirit and design of the gospel, and taught by the example of your master in heaven.

HAPPY indeed would it be for the world, if they, to whom God in his providence, gives power and authority over other men, would remember from whom these priviledges came, for what purpose they were given, what account must be rendered of them; and above all, if they would endeavour in the exercise and application of them, to imitate the example of the giver. For the supreme, self-existent master of the universe, employs his power for the preservation of his dependents, and exerts his authority only to make them wise, good, and happy; if he commands any duty, it is to promote their happiness, if he forbids any thing, it is to prevent their misery, if he corrects, it is for their improvement; and in fine, he connects his glory and their good so closely together, that obedience is as much their interest as their duty.

THE gracious father is so united to the awful governour, and the tender friend, and compassionate redeemer, so mixed as it were with the sovereign master, that tho' his power be unlimited, his superiority infinite, and his will arbitrary and irresistible; *yet still his service is perfect freedom, his yoke easy,*
and

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and his burden light: this amiable example you should endeavour to imitate, and study to make your servants as happy, as their state and condition, and your circumstances will admit of, and with this view you must allow them a reward proportioned to the labour you exact, neither imposing upon their simplicity, taking advantage of their necessity, nor deceiving them in the nature of the work for which you engage them, or the value of reward you propose, *wo unto him* (sayeth the prophet Jeremiah) *who useth his neighbour's service without wages, and giveth him not for his work. I will come near to you to judgement,* (sayeth God by the prophet Malachi) *and will be a swift witness, against them, who oppress the hireling in his wages.*

SOME masters conceal the heaviest and most mortifying parts of the work they expect, and amuse the servants they would engage, with fair and general promises which they never mean to fulfil, with exaggerated accounts of their perquisites, and flattering pictures of the condition in which they are to live; a piece of ill timed policy at once unjust, cruel and unwise. Unjust, because in this as well as every other contract, we should deal with sincerity and candour, not imposing upon the ignorance, nor taking advantage of the credulity

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dulity of the persons, with whom we have to do, but fairly informing them of what service we mean to exact, expressly and candidly determining the reward we are willing to allow, and repeating the terms of the contract with all possible precision, untill we find that they understand us, and are satisfied; or decline acceptance of the conditions. Diffimulation in cases of this nature, must be very criminal, because in many things, the servant must confide in the veracity of the master, and judge of his intended state and condition by his report. It is also unwise with respect to a man's own interest, for when the servant discovers the imposition, he has no more that attachment to your interest, that heart to do his work, and that affection to your person and family, that are necessary to make him diligent, careful and honest: his duty becomes a burden, he looks upon his master as a cheat, and either thinks of nothing, but wearing out the time with an heartless eye service, or is tempted to believe, that he has a right to indemnify himself, by pilfering and dishonesty. Therefore it is the interest, as well as duty of masters, to be ingenuous, when they speak of the nature of the work they require, and definite in the terms they propose, promising nothing but what they design to perform. And as there is nothing, that can less admit of disputes

putes than money, it might perhaps be prudent, both for the master and servant, to condescend upon a certain sum, in full of wages, perquisites, and in fine every thing that the servant has to expect; this would prevent all discontent, and rapaciousness, and preclude every cause of complaint.

AND further, as you should be express and candid in the terms of the contract, so ye should conscientiously perform them, and honestly pay the promised wages. Some become servants in order to learn some business, or trade; here it is the duty of the master diligently, and fully to instruct the servant, in all that pertains to the business proposed; assisting him with his best advice; directing him by the experience that himself has gained; reserving no secret, that is necessary or useful to that occupation; and in a word, doing every thing in his power, to send him out into the world, well qualified to earn his bread by his business, and to be useful to society. Negligence in this respect is extremely base, and criminal, because it must either proceed from a pitiful selfishness, and poor spirited envy, or from an unmanly slothfulness, and inhumane indifference, that slight the sacred obligations of justice, honour, and conscience; and because it is proving unfaithful in the principal, and most important

portant part of the contract, and will prove a great and irreparable loss to the party concerned; for the precious time he has mispent cannot be recalled, the money he has thrown away cannot be recovered, and age advances too swiftly to leave him time, or perhaps capacity, to repair his loss; for there is a certain period of life, in which there is a quickness of apprehension, a facility in acquiring habits, and a genius for imitation in arts, which if it be improved, gives a dexterity in most things, that riper years very rarely can attain; for these reasons, it is hardly in the power of man to be guilty of a more iniquitous practice, than that I am warning you against, because it is an injury and injustice, whose fatal effects the sufferer shall feel through life, which will render him unjust to those who employ him, and less useful to society, must expose him to many mortifications, and much loss, and may keep him in poverty and distress to the end of his days. Therefore if you would act with the humanity of men, with the integrity and honour of good members of society, or with the justice and charity of Christians, never let selfish considerations, or indolent indifference hinder you, from instructing your servants, in every thing that pertains to the business, which ye have undertaken to teach them.

W H E N

WHEN they serve you for wages, remember, that their hire is the price of things, that are very precious to them; I mean their time, their liberty, their sweat, their strength and their health; and consequently to defraud them of it, must be the blackest iniquity, and cannot fail to awaken the vengeance of the just judge of all the earth: for excepting the poor, and miserable, there is no class of men, which God hath so pecuniary taken under his immediate protection, or declared so frequently and peremptorily, that he will see justice done them, as the hired servants. *I will be a swift witness*, says he, *against those who oppress the hireling in his wages*: behold (says St. James) *the hire of the labourers, that is kept back of you by fraud crieth, and the cries of them which have laboured, have entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth.* And the commandment, *thou shalt not oppress an hired servant*, is as plain, and peremptory, as *thou shalt not steal*, consequently, all shifts to defraud them of their promised reward, however plausible they may appear, and however well they may succeed by superior interest upon earth, are highly criminal in the sight of God, will ly heavy on your consciences, in your last moments, and rise up against you in judgement.

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As it is highly iniquitous to defraud them of the promised reward, so it is unjust and cruel, to detain it from them, for any long time after it is earned, for they rarely have any other resources, to supply their wants; in such a selfish and diffident world, they must pay dear for what they cannot pay immediately; and sometimes the comfortable subsistence of a numerous and helpless family, depends upon your punctually answering the just demand, *at his day* (says the Almighty) *thou shalt give him his hire, neither shall the sun go down upon it, for he is poor and setteth his heart upon it, lest he cry against thee unto the Lord, and it be a sin unto thee. Defraud not the poor of his living, (sayeth the wise son of Syrach) and make not the needy eyes to wait long.* In truth, you can have no creditor who has a juster title to his money, none that deserves a preference, to a diligent and honest servant, and few, that for the most part, are less able to bear your delays in payment.

FURTHER, it is the duty of masters, to use their servants with kindness and humanity, this they have a title to as men, and a right to expect as Christians, and indeed, it is no more than a reasonable return, to those who are spending their time, and exhausting their strength in your service: your
 commands

commands ought to be reasonable, delivered with mildness, and proportioned to their strength: for when your commands are unreasonable, and beyond their power to perform, obedience is without heart; negligence without shame; and reproof without effect; because you require more than they are able to perform, they are apt to do less than they can: indeed nothing is more discouraging to a diligent and faithful servant, than to find, that all he can do, will not content his master; the despair of pleasing abates his endeavours, and at length he turns indifferent, whether he be approved of or not: and as your commands must be reasonable, so your reproofs should be well timed, void of passion, and given with a certain air of concern for the servant's happiness, as well as your own interest; he who is always carping with his servants, hardens them against reproof, and makes himself unhappy, and contemptible; the frequency of his reproofs destroys their effect, they soon come to be considered as things of course, are heard with disregard, forgotten as soon as heard, or laughed at when he is gone.

SOME masters seem to think, that nothing can be done, without a mighty bustle and noise, that there is something great in flashes of anger, and
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something striking in volleys of oaths ; and the truth is, by accustoming their servants to these things, they do in some degree become necessary, because the servant never thinks his master in earnest, unless his commands come in the imperious tone of anger, and with the usual emphasis of oaths ; but this is a necessity that the master creates to himself, and tho' at first his tearing and swearing, may seem to have some effect, yet even then it is all eye-service, when the angry voice, ceases to ring in the servant's ear, he ceases to regard his master's interest, and indemnifies himself for the hurry in his presence, by idleness in his absence ; and in a little time his temper grows familiar, the continual repetition of oaths, makes them pass as common words, his reproofs are heard with indifference, as things that cannot be avoided, and his anger beheld with contempt, as the effect of a peevish temper and impotent mind. There may be some masters so weak, as to imagine, that they command respect, and support their authority, when they make the house ring about them, see their servants shun their presence, and put all around them into hurry and confusion ; but the respect they procure, is much of the same kind, with that we shew to a mad man, or a brute in his fury, I mean, we humour the one and keep out of the way of the other. And as these hurri-

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canes of passion betray a weakness of mind, that must lessen them in the esteem of their servants, so they proportionably diminish their authority, they are first feared, then despised, at length ridiculed and insulted.

WHEREAS the man who never reproves without cause, and then delivers his mind with calmness, gravity, and resolution, whose words are few, sedate, and significant, and carry in them something of the kindness of the friend, as well as the authority of the master, seldom fails to rivet his reproofs deep in the heart, commonly produces amendment, gains esteem, and commands obedience. For when a man who is generally of an equal, humane, and pleased temper, puts on the air of displeasure, the thing is unusual, and consequently strikes; his reproofs, delivered with calmness, and seasoned with a certain tenderness for the interest of the offender, are almost irresistible, for we know from experience, that they proceed not from peevishness of temper, we see by his way and manner that they are not the effects of an hasty passion, nor the consequences of any hatred to our persons; and therefore we conclude, that they are not without cause; that he complains, because we are faulty, reproves because it is necessary, and exhorts us to

amendment because he is our friend. Obedience is always the most hearty, thorough and constant, that is founded on love and esteem; and masters have a thousand ways of obtaining these, if they please, for servants are not incapable of gratitude, nor insensible to good offices; their affections may be won sometimes by a little condescension, sometimes by obliging expressions, and almost always by shewing a just regard to their interest and happiness; such as giving them friendly advice in difficulties, using them with care and tenderness in the time of sickness, and generously sympathizing with them in their several afflictions.

THESE are things that will not cost the master much, yet they will procure for him the pleasant reflection, that he does to others, as he would wish to be done by himself; they will obtain the happy approbation of his master who is in heaven, and raise in the breasts of his servants, an attachment to his interest, an affection to his person, a submission to his will, and diligence and fidelity in his service, more generous in their nature, and more sincere and constant than the greatest exertion of his authority will ever obtain. And when a servant loves and esteems his master, there are few that will go greater lengths for their friends, than he

he will do for him, few whose friendship will be more disinterested, active, lasting, and sincere; several instances might be produced where a servant has done more, and stuck closer than a brother, and adhered to his master in spite of danger, and against his own interest, when the frowns of adversity made his other friends fall off: tho' you should never need their friendship, yet there is a certain pleasure in possessing their affection, and no man can tell what changes of fortune may ly between him and the grave, or whose assistance he may need before he leaves the world.

BUT besides the duties I have already mentioned, if you would act with the humility and charity of Christians, or the sound policy of prudent masters, you must avoid all contemptuous and slighting expressions to your servants, for they can never answer any good end, they cut to the quick, sink deep in the memory, and raise a resentment that is keen and long lived; they are too severe trials for the patience of your servants, and bid very fair to make them lose at once, all sense of duty, all considerations of interest, and all regard to your authority; and prompt them to treat you in your own way, and answer with a freedom and insolence, that however justly you may deserve, you
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will not easily digest, and tho' they should prudently restrain their tongues for the present, yet they will hardly forgive, and never forget the affront. It may chance to meet you where you least expect it, and will effectually lessen their affection to your person, their concern for your interest, and their diligence and fidelity in your business.

BESIDES it is cruel to make them feel their dependent condition so severely, it is unmanly to insult your inferiors, unchristian to treat men with contempt, who are made in the same divine image, serve the same Lord Jesus Christ, and are heirs of the same promises with yourselves; and it is foolish and unnatural to despise members of the same political body, as necessary and as useful in their stations, as those of the highest rank, *for the head cannot say to the foot, I have no need of thee*, the master can no more be happy without the servant's labour, than the servant subsist without the master's wages; they are mutually dependent, and consequently the servant should not envy the master's superiority, nor the master insult the servant's meaner condition, but both study to please God, and promote one another's happiness. *Whereas* (says the son of Syrach) *thy servant worketh truly, intreat him not evil, nor the hireling that bestoweth himself*
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for thee, let thy soul love a good servant, and defraud him not of his wages.

NEITHER is it prudent to encourage servants, to entertain you with the slanderous tales of the neighbourhood, and the private concerns of the families around you; for by this you shall train them up to lying and slander, and shall be partakers of their guilt; talebearing will grow into an habit upon them, and in the end be exercised against yourselves. If they find you disposed to listen with attention and pleasure, they will first collect all the current slander of the neighbourhood with diligence, then pry into your neighbours concerns with impertinent curiosity, and at last, when subject fails, invent secrets, and forge calumnies with dexterity and impudence. If you hear their ill natured tales, they will raise unworthy and uncharitable suspicions in your minds; if you believe them, they will lead you into rash judgement, and unjust actions; if you relate them, they will involve you into trouble and contention with your neighbours; and make you forfeit the favour of your God, by disobeying his solemn commandment, *thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour*. I know not how a master can appear in a more contemptible light, than when he is listening to the slanders his servant

servant has collected in the neighbourhood, or invented to gratify his malicious curiosity; he betrays such a meanness in the method of obtaining his information, such a malice of heart in delighting to hear, and such a pernicious disposition, if he intends to propagate the ill natured reports, and let me add too, such a want of prudence, in encouraging a trade, that is carried on at his own expence; (for servants generally purchase the secrets of their neighbours families, with the exchange of those of their own,) that he seems to be at once void of sense, honour, and conscience, and as little acquainted with the duties of social virtue, as he is with the obligations of Christian charity. In a word, such a foolish conduct is unjust to your neighbours, cruel to your servants, and will prove pernicious to yourselves in this world, and that which is to come.

AND lastly, but most of all, it is the duty of masters to instruct their servants in the principles, and exhort them to practise the precepts of the gospel: you have a very common and significant proverb, *that every man is king, priest, and prophet in his own house*; what does it mean? surely nothing less than this, that he ought to have the supreme authority in his family, offer its sacrifices of
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praise and prayer, and instruct its members in the knowledge and will of God. Most masters are ready enough to claim the authority of the first character, would to God, they were as careful to perform the duties of the other two. That they are duties incumbent upon them, will I think, appear very evident from the following considerations. First, as all power is of God, so all power ought to be employed to promote his glory, to co-operate with his known will, and to accomplish such things as he has declared are well pleasing to him. How can we promote his glory more effectually, than by inspiring all those upon whom we have any influence, with the knowledge of his attributes, with a reverence of his laws, and a sense of his authority and holiness? than by improving the understandings, converting the hearts, and reforming the lives of our dependents, and teaching all who are under our inspection and authority, *to deny themselves to all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly and righteously in this present world.* If we believe, with the Apostle, that *he will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth,* we must also conclude, that we are co-operating with his will, when we are endeavouring, to increase the religious knowledge, and promote the salvation of those around us. And that this is acceptable

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to him we are very certain, because he has declared, that, *they who turn many to righteousness, shall shine as the stars forever, and ever*, and commended Abraham for his attention to the duty before us, *I know him* (says he) *that he will command his children and his household after him, that they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgement.* Therefore if you would be grateful to God, for raising you to the rank of masters, if you have any zeal to promote his glory and honour; any sincerity when ye say in your daily devotions, *thy kingdom come, thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven*, or any desire to receive his approbation in a day of judgement, you will endeavour to improve the religious knowledge, and moral conduct of those, whom the providence of heaven shall commit to your care.

CAN you suppose yourselves to be innocent? or can you expect that the blessing of God, will prosper your enterprises, if you permit his worship to be neglected, his name to be blasphemed, and his sacred laws to be transgressed in your families? no; your servants may perish in their guilt, but their blood shall be required at your hands, the affronts that are offered to the honour and authority of God, shall be laid to your charge, because you did
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not endeavour to reclaim those who were under your inspection; and the iniquity of your houses may be visited upon yourselves, your children, and your substance.

BUT supposing it were of no consequence to yourselves, whether God be honoured or dishonoured in your families, supposing that the providence of heaven, by putting them under your inspection, imposed upon you, no charge of their minds or morals, yet still Christian charity, nay common humanity, would require, that you should not suffer them to continue in ignorance, with respect to the important truths of religion, nor to follow such profligate courses as lead to their ruin. For, as much as the soul is superior to the body, in the dignity of its nature, and eternity more important than time, upon account of its duration, so much more incumbent is it upon you to exert your charity, for the improvement of their minds and to prevent their ruin, and promote their happiness in a future existence; you may treat them in other respects with kindness, deal with them with candour, and pay them with exactness, yet while you are deficient in the duty that I am recommending, you only take heed to that which is least, and neglect the noblest offices of charity.

IF you know by experience, that vice is naturally pernicious, if you believe that the happiness of a future existence, depends upon the present conduct, and expect that every man shall receive according to the deeds done in the body; and at the same time behold with indifference, those who are committed to your care by providence, and are contributing to your happiness by their labour, pursuing such profligate courses as must make them forever unhappy, can you by any means more fully demonstrate that you are void of humanity? If you saw a blind man approaching to the brink of a precipice, and neglected to give him warning, or stood upon the bank of a stream, and beheld an unfortunate wretch carried away with the current, and refused to stretch out your hand to save him, tho' within your reach; your barbarity would not be half so great, because a few moments would put an end to their misery, because you lay under no other obligations, but the common ties of humanity, and because the hasty process of such accidents, would not leave much time, for the scene to work upon the tender feelings of the mind, and the sight of the objects to soften the heart: but in the other case, the misery to which your servants expose themselves shall never have an end; besides the common obligations of humanity, they are committed

committed to your inspection by providence, and entitled to your friendship by acquaintance and gratitude ; their ruin is gradually accomplishing under your eye, and the miserable objects, are for whole months and years as it were perishing before you.

IT is indeed a full proof that religion has no real influence upon the mind of the master, when he quietly tolerates vice and impiety in his servants, for their conduct would otherwise be so disagreeable to his own disposition ; and in his opinion, so dishonourable and ungrateful to God, and so fatal to themselves ; that he could not fail to reprove, and endeavour to reclaim them, out of reverence to God, out of charity to them, and out of aversion from their evil ways : so that we may with much more reason conclude with respect to the soul, than the body, *that he who provideth not for his own, and especially for those of his house, is worse than an infidel, and hath denied the faith*, that he has neither the humanity of a man nor the zeal of a Christian.

BUT if neither duty to God, nor charity to man can prevail upon you, to endeavour to inspire your servants with the fear of God, and reverence for his laws, at least let your present satisfaction and worldly interest persuade you to comply ; for nothing

thing bids fairer to make them good and profitable servants: you complain loudly and sometimes perhaps very justly, that you are ill served, that some of them are dishonest, others insolent, many slothful and negligent, and that, almost all, seem to want an inward principle of duty, and a conviction at the heart, *that they ought to do service as to God and not unto men.* Does not the evil itself point out the remedy, inspire them with a sense of an all-seeing eye, and with an expectation of a future judgement; teach them their duty to God and their neighbour; convince them of the truth, and explain to them the obligations of religion, in fine, labour by instruction, and example, to make them Christians, and then they will have an inward principle of duty, and be honest, diligent, and submissive for conscience sake.

BUT how can they have any inward principle of duty, when perhaps they never hear of God or religion in your families, when they are here corrupted by bad example, there debauched with the principles of infidelity, in another place made accomplices in fraud, or confidents in the intrigues of lust, and almost every where, meet with neglect of God, and contempt of religion. When some of you grudge them a few hours upon a Sunday, for
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publick worship, or private devotion; others ridicule religion in their presence, and convince them by their conduct, that they neither believe its truths nor reverence its institutions; and almost all of you leave them in gross ignorance of the principles of the gospel, in a continued negligence of religious exercises, and in a word, deprived of every thing that keeps the conscience tender, and feeling; the fear of God, and a future judgement, powerful at the heart, and a sense of duty alive in the breast.

ALL bad example is infectious, but that of masters peculiarly so, because it is always before the eyes of their servants, because it is recommended by their superior station, enforced by a kind of reverence and authority, and gradually copied either with a view to please the master, by conformity to to his sentiments and manners; or from that inclination that is in all ranks, to vie with and imitate their superiors.

IF they see you, affronting your master in heaven, by blaspheming his name, ridiculing his institutions, and transgressing his laws, they will learn to be insolent to their master upon earth, if you mispend the Sunday, they will misemploy the week,

week, if you defraud, they will steal, if you debauch with your friends, they will drink with their companions; the slander and blasphemies that are heard in the dining room, will be vented in the kitchen, and in fine, they will imitate your vices as far as is consistent with their circumstances and situation, and serve you as superficially, and with as little sense of duty, as they see you serve your God. Therefore, if you would be honestly and diligently served, labour to impress the hearts of your servants with a sense of religion, revive this sense in their minds by religious exercises, and enforce it by your own example; convince them by your conduct, that you fear God, that you reverence religion, that vice and impiety are in your opinion, the worst faults of which a servant can be guilty.

PARDON me, if I suspect that many masters attend to little else in their servants, but their own immediate advantage, and reason of their impiety and vicious conduct, (as long as they do not affect their own interest) as the Jews did of the treason of Judas, *what is that to us, let themselves see to that*; if the servant labours with diligence, if he does his business with dexterity, if he be in the way when he is called for, tho' he blasphemes God, destroys

troys his constitution by debauchery, and follows such courses, as must end in his ruin, the master is contented, the servant is commended, and all is seemingly well.

BUT if he neglects his business, or answers with insolence, if he carelessly uses, or dishonestly pilfers any thing, committed to his care, in a word, if he hurts your interest, or shocks your pride, you feel with a quick sensibility, and reprove with all the emphasis of anger. But he may dishonour God with impunity, he may contract vicious habits, keep bad company, imbibe libertine principles, and live without God and Christ in your families, without meeting with a frown or receiving a reproof.

Now, supposing that the honour of God, and charity to the souls of your servants, were out of the question; such a conduct is inconsistent with your interest and happiness as masters, for vice is progressive in its nature, hardens the heart, and leads men forward from one kind of wickedness to another, insomuch that your servants will soon add dishonesty to debauchery, slander to blasphemy, and a contempt of the commandments of their master, to a neglect of the precepts of their God;

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they will debauch one another, publish the secret concerns of your family, and what is still more dreadful, corrupt the minds and manners of your children, by their licentious discourses and pernicious example; in truth, religion is the only hold that you have of their hearts, and the best guardian of their fidelity, diligence, and submission, and therefore it is your interest as well as duty, to endeavour to maintain a sense of it upon their minds, and to teach them to fear God, and keep his commandments: to do this effectually, you must instruct the ignorant, reprove the profligate, encourage the virtuous, enforce your exhortations and reproofs by your own example, and carefully adhere to the Psalmist's excellent resolution, *I will walk within my house with a perfect heart, he that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house, he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight.*

To conclude, I have now and formerly laid before you, the duties of a connection that comprehends the bulk of mankind, duties that are important with respect to society, interesting with regard to your present satisfaction, and future happiness, and that need to be often repeated, because temptations to neglect them often occur.

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MAY God second my weak endeavours with his efficacious grace, and so powerfully influence your hearts, that both masters and servants may so faithfully discharge their several duties, that they may obtain the approbation of their master in heaven, meet in his presence with joy, and dwell among his saints forever, grant this O most gracious God for Christ's sake. *Amen.*

F I N I S.

E R R A T A.

Page 6 Line 24 *imagine* is before, read, *imagine before* p. 21 l. 12 *talk*, r. *talking*
 P. 28 l. 21 *those*, r. *these* p. 29 l. 25. *which*, r. *whom* p. 30 l. 17 *requests*, r. *request*
 p. 37 l. 5 *head*, r. *heads* p. 77 l. 25 *in*, r. *into* p. 87 l. 5 and 6 and, transposed from
 3 to 6 line p. 133 l. 45 *some of you*, r. *some*.



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